





## Sketch

# Empire in the pink as war threatens



Simon Hoggart

THE COMMONS is preparing itself for war. MPs love this kind of thing. Suddenly they are back in wing collars and bomb hats. They love to be constructing makeshift shelters of corrugated iron and sandbags.

As their high-pitched voices crackle readily through the airwaves, a twin-engine Dakota prepares for take-off from Croydon Aerodrome. They yearn to say: "By beav to inform you that no such undertaking has been received from Saddam Hussein."

But first we had more important matters to attend to. Jenny Tonge (Lib Dem, Richmond) was worried about gay rights in the remains of the Empire.

When not planning to bomb the bejassus out of the Iraqis, the Foreign Secretary is deeply politically correct. He instructed us not to call them "dependent territories" because many of them were very prosperous these days and not dependent at all. They are now to be called "overseas territories".

The list gives us a measure of how totally and utterly the Empire has been dismantled, consisting now only of scattered bits, like Ozymandias's kneecaps. Their total population is 180,000, the size of a small provincial city. The largest territory is now Bermuda, which has 60,000 people, followed by the Cayman Islands and Gibraltar.

Then there are the Turks and Caicos, the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, St Helena, South Sandwich, the dear old Falklands and just four others. Some are so small that they couldn't support one gay bar, even if it were legal.

Dr Tonge wanted to know whether the Government was doing everything it could to prevent the territories from imposing anti-gay laws. Mr Cook replied vaguely. But at

least Dr Tonge had cleared up one mystery: now we know why they're still coloured pink on the map.

Now and again Tories tried to raise the topic of Ann Bullen, the diary secretary whom Mr Cook dismissed and whom he briefly considered replacing with his mistress. Help came from the unexpected quarter of Sir Peter Tapsell, the Tory MP for Louth.

Sir Peter is round and sleek and spongy. He is packed with pomposity the way that a profiterole is crammed with custard.

"When I was a young man," he intoned, taking us back to an era when a gentleman could buy a champagne supper, a girl at Spitalfields, a cab home and still have change from sixpence, "when I was a young man, Anthony Eden said to me that attacks of *hormones* are nearly always a mistake. We would do this institution a great deal of good if we abandoned such attacks from both sides." (Of course Eden also counselled standing up against dictators, but who was discussing that topic?)

Michael Howard, the shadow foreign secretary, foolishly ignored Sir Peter and returned to Ms Bullen. In the nine days before deciding not to appoint his mistress, had Mr Cook been placed under any pressure?

Whatever his faults, Mr Cook is a superb parliamentary performer and batted that one aside like Brian Lara playing beach cricket. "Since you dismissed Derek Lewis (the head of the prison service) at a cost to the taxpayer of £200,000, in view of your extensive track record a period of silence on your part would be welcome."

Labour MPs cheered deliriously, and Mr Howard gave that sickly sweet smile, like a corpse receiving an unexpected electric shock.

Finally there was a statement on Iraq. And who was this tall, tanned figure, faintly foppish in pink shirt and sky-blue tie? Why, it was John Major, whom some older readers may remember from the distant past. His high-pitched voice was as pungent and plangent as a trumpet.

Mr Major was the last prime minister to take us to war. Strange that yesterday he looked like the proprietor of a gay bar on Pitcairn Island.

## Review

# Outer naturalism, inner nightmare

Michael Billington

*Afore Night Come*  
Theatr Clwyd, Mold

SHOULD declare an interest. In 1980 I took part in a college reading of an eerily haunting play by a fellow student. The play, *Afore Night Come* by David Rudkin, was quickly picked up by the RSC for an experimental season.

Now it gets a rare revival at Theatr Clwyd, and, even when viewed with critical detachment, it still strikes me as one of the defining works of the 1960s: an unnerving blend of Pinter, Hitchcock and Artaud spiced with Rudkin's own brand of morbid fatalism.

The setting is a pear orchard on the edge of the Black Country. And, at first, it seems as if we might be in for a Weskerish work play as the piece-workers and the student casuals gather for the fruit-picking under the eye of a surly foreman. But the work rhythms are disrupted by the arrival of a frail, dark-glassed Irishman, Roche, whose poetic gift leads him instantly to be dubbed "Shakespeare".

With his physical incompetence and alien background, he is viewed first with scorn and then detestation by the group; and, as the skies darken for a Lear-like storm, it becomes evident that this pitiable, shuffling old man is going to be ritually slaughtered.

In the intervening years, we have become used to violence on stage. What makes Rudkin's play so shocking is that the cruelty grows, almost imperceptibly, out of a background of detailed naturalism. The foreman is obsessed

with the fact that 600 boxes must be filled "before night come"; the workers are seen as grumbling wage slaves rather than figures of evil. But Roche is turned into a persecuted victim because of his Irishness, his physical debility, and his eccentric use of language. The ringleader of the violence, Ginger, bred in a world of rural superstition, also seems to harbour a mystic belief that his own childlessness can be cured by an act of bloodletting.

Can such things be? There was such an unsolved ritual murder in the rural Midlands in 1945. But, more to the point, Rudkin makes the action dramatically convincing by showing how fear of the unclassifiable outsider turns to hatred and the weak invariably succumb to the group ethic.

Theatr Clwyd, under Terry Hands one of the liveliest theatres in Britain, has also splendidly chosen Dominic Cooke to direct the piece. Two years ago at the Gate, Cooke staged a remarkably similar German play, *Hunting Scenes From Lower Bavaria*, which dealt with rural persecution of a suspected homosexual. Once again, Cooke conveys an atmosphere of both surface normality and gathering menace.

And there are first-rate performances from Frank Grimes as the alternately aggressive and deferential Roche, Oliver Ryan as an unhinged religious fanatic aware of the impending horror, and Ifan Huw Dafydd as the bowler-hatted foreman. After the act of Artaudesque horror, the play shudders to its drawn-out conclusion. But its understanding of the well-springs of violence is total.

# British Airways offer Valentine's Day in the Big Apple for £14

Keith Harper

BRITISH Airways is wearing its heart on its tailfin today — by offering £14 Valentine's Day tickets to New York to the first 100 phone callers who want to spend a romantic weekend in the Big Apple.

The deal includes the return air fare and taxes, as well as up to three nights in a four-

star hotel. The 100 couples will be dealt with on a first come, first served basis on a special "love line".

After a similar promotion last year caused embarrassment when two winners of £10 Concorde tickets to New York turned out to be British Telecom employees, BT has set up special telephone technology.

The Loveline on 0870 60 747 60 opens at 7pm tonight.



Joseph Steele is led back to prison from the court: 'I'll prove my innocence even if it takes another 12 years'

PHOTOGRAPH BY MURDO MACLEOD

Fury outside court as ice cream war murderers face life in prison after appeal fails

# Killers sent back to jail

John Arlidge

TWO men jailed for life for killing six people in Glasgow's notorious Ice Cream Wars were back behind bars last night after Scotland's most senior judge threw out their appeal. They could spend the rest of their lives in prison.

The judgment prompted a violent reaction from relatives and friends. Police reinforcements were called to control an angry crowd who shouted abuse at police and lawyers outside the Court of Appeal in Edinburgh as Joseph Steele and Thomas "TC" Campbell were led away to Saughton Prison.

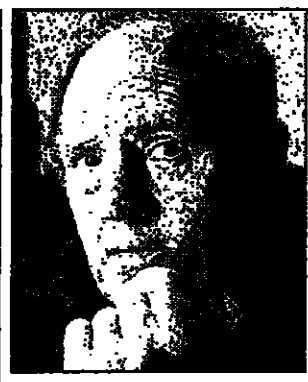
Campbell and Steele had been out on bail for more than a year while the appeal was being heard, and had been confident they would be cleared. They could remain in prison indefinitely because they refuse to admit their guilt and cannot be considered for parole. But the two men, their relatives and their lawyers vowed to fight on to overturn what they claim is a miscarriage of justice. As he

was led from the court, Steele shouted: "I'll be back. I'll prove my innocence even if it takes another 12 years."

Campbell, 45, and Steele, 36, were jailed for life in 1984 for murdering Andrew "Fat Boy" Doyle and five other members of his family. Doyle was an 18-year-old "heavy" who drove an ice-cream van in the east end of Glasgow, where local gangsters used the vans as a front for distributing stolen goods and drugs.

The court heard that Campbell and Steele were paid to "put the frighteners" on Doyle and stop him "stealing a pitch" controlled by a local gang leader, nicknamed the Licensee. After a series of threats and shotgun attacks, the pair went to Doyle's tenement flat early on April 16, 1984, and doused the door with petrol and set it alight. The fire killed Doyle and five other members of his family.

Although the men continually protested their innocence and staged hunger strikes and escapes from prison as publicity stunts, the courts refused to reopen the case. But the chief prosecution witness, William Love, signed an affidavit four years



Thomas "TC" Campbell: planning new hunger strike

ago saying he had lied under oath. He said he made made up an account of a crucial meeting in a bar where Campbell and Steele allegedly discussed using arson to "teach Fat Boy a lesson".

He had lied, he said, because he had been blackmailed and threatened by two senior police officers investigating the murders. The two officers — now dead — said they would prosecute him for a series of crimes if he did not testify against Campbell and Steele, he claimed.

After representations from John Carroll, the two men's solicitor, Michael Forsyth, the then Scottish secretary, ordered the courts to reopen the case in 1996. The appeal hearing began in December, when lawyers for the pair said that Love's affidavits proved they were the victims of a miscarriage of justice. They also argued that the original trial judge had misdirected the jury.

But after a four-hour hearing — televised for the first time in British legal history — the Court of Appeal ruled that there was no misdirection and Love's new testimony was inadmissible.

The Lord Justice Clerk, Lord Cullen, sitting with Lords McCluskey and Sutherland, said evidence from a witness who changed his story could only be considered if there was a "reasonable explanation" why he had recanted. There was no reasonable explanation and no independent support.

Outside the court a 50-strong crowd of relatives and friends expressed their fury. Steele's 34-year-old wife, Dolly, who is expecting the

couple's second child, accused the judges of a conspiracy to deny the two men justice.

"They are covering up for the police and the judges at the earlier hearings. They don't have the guts to admit the courts made a terrible mistake and that our boys didn't do it. The whole system is rotten. My husband's been convicted on the word of a known perjurer." The couple's first son, John, wept: "They've given me my dad for a year and now they are taking him away from me again."

Campbell's girlfriend, Karen Parker, who gave birth to their daughter, Shannon, 10 days ago, said: "It is a disgrace that those men can sit there and play with words which condemn my daughter to a life without her father."

Mr Carroll called for a change in the law to allow Love to be prosecuted for perjury as part of a new appeal hearing. Campbell is planning another hunger strike — he nearly died after refusing food for three months when he was held in Shotts prison. Steele's family said he would mount fresh escapes and publicity stunts.

# Labour pledge to kill 'Times revolt'

Ewen MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

GOVERNMENT ministers will seek to head off a revolt by up to 50 MPs over newspaper price-cutting by promising it has not gone soft on Rupert Murdoch's group. It was disclosed last night.

Leftwingers are threatening to rebel when the Competition Bill, which aims to protect companies from unfair practices, goes to the Commons. The Government suffered a defeat in the Lords on Monday night when peers, including 23 from the Labour benches, voted to outlaw the kind of price-cutting campaign used by the Times.

Downing Street was adamant yesterday that the bill would be amended, which prohibits a newspaper from abusing its position in the market, will be killed off when the bill goes before MPs.

But the Government will try to placate Labour backbenchers. Memos will be circulated among backbenchers to persuade them of the Government's case, promising that the bill as a whole creates a framework for use against predatory pricing.

The bill will give the Office of Fair Trading increased powers. The OFT director, John Bridgeman, will decide whether there is a case for investigating Mr Murdoch and government sources hinted that the Times's price-cutting tactics will almost certainly be referred to Mr Bridgeman.

The suspicion among Labour leftwingers is that Tony Blair is going easy on the Murdoch group out of fear of losing the support of the Sun.

But Nigel Griffiths, the Department of Trade and Industry minister who will help steer the Competition Bill through the Commons, said last night: "There is no question of us going soft on the Murdoch group. The Office of Fair Trading has already used its powers against the Murdoch group."

Downing Street, ministers and whips yesterday discussed the problems thrown up by the Lords defeat. The bill is due to go to the Commons next month.

The Lords amendment will be killed off at the committee stage but MPs will have a chance to vote on it again, in late April or early May, when the bill goes on the Commons floor.

The Government, with its huge majority, can easily overturn the Lords amendment, but, having already had to deal with a high-profile revolt over lone parents, it is not looking for another one.

Polly Toynbee, page 9

# Revenge soaking fails to dampen singer's spirits

Amelia Gentleman and Emily Sheffield

THE Chumbawamba singer Danbert Nobacon was forced to see the funny side of his own joke yesterday when he was doused with water in revenge for his Brit Awards attack on the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott.

A Daily Mirror reporter pounced on the anarchist band as they left their London hotel yesterday and soaked the singer.

But the group were unrepentant. "If John Prescott as a representative of the Government has the nerve to turn up at events such as the Brit Awards in a vain attempt to make Labour seem cool and trendy, then he deserves all we can throw at him," they said in a statement.

Mr Prescott yesterday rounded furiously on Nobacon, who drenched him with a bucket of cold water and reduced his wife to tears, branding the act a "deplorable" publicity stunt. He said the "contemptible" behaviour had terrified his wife.

Nobacon attacked Mr Prescott minutes after his group had performed a revised version of their hit Tubthumping criticising New Labour for "selling out". Nobacon leapt on the table Mr Prescott was sharing with his wife Pauline and other guests and doused the party with cold water.

Still carrying an ice bucket, he was grabbed by London Arena security guards and handed over to police. He was later released without charge.

The band's statement continued: "This wanton act of agit-prop is dedicated to single mothers, pensioners, sacked dock workers, people being



Chumbawamba singer Danbert Nobacon was unrepentant yesterday after soaking John Prescott, right, at the Brits



forced into workfare, people who will be denied legal aid, students who will be denied the free university education that the whole of the Labour front bench benefited from, the homeless and all of the underclasses who are now suffering at the hands of the Labour government."

Mr Prescott's office said: "It appears that it was a publicity stunt designed to draw attention to the group's act. Mr Prescott thinks it is utterly contemptible that his wife and other womenfolk should have been subjected to such terrifying behaviour simply because they were accompanying a public figure at an event designed to support the British music industry."

The matter was in the hands of the police, a spokeswoman for Mr Prescott added.

Ice storm, G2, page 4

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## The four ages of women

### Kate Winslet (22)

Young, Kate Winslet was a jobbing actress in a delicatessen in north west London. Her main concern was landing parts in television commercials. Four years on, she has established herself as Hollywood's favourite young Brit, and has already been named as one of the world's "50 most beautiful people" by American magazine, People.

Not a Winslet stranger to the glitz and the best supporting actress award for her role in Emma Thompson's smash hit *Sense and Sensibility* — the film which made her hot property and which helped deliver the female lead. By that time she already had the Australian film, *Heavenly Creatures* under her belt and was about to embark on another period drama part in *Jude*, earning her the nickname "Corset Kate".

The second oldest of four children, she was brought up in an ordinary semi-detached in Reading as the daughter of a family of aspiring thespians. Financially independent since high school, she came from a long line of aspiring actors. Her father's side of the family boasted a theatre troop while her maternal grandparents ran a repertory theatre.



William Hill odds on Kate Winslet: 14-1

### Helena Bonham Carter (31)

For years, she has been the personification of British costume drama and the most famous product of the Merchant-Ivory brigade. Even the fact that her great-grandfather was the Prime Minister Lord Asquith and her grandmother the Liberal orator Lady Violet Bonham Carter takes second place to her reputation as a chaotic, all-purpose vision of Edwardian Englishness.

Bonham Carter was first labelled the perfect English rose after her appearance in the 1985 film *A Room with a View* — and the reputation was hardly dispelled by her cosmetics contract as the face of Yardley. Even Barry Norman called her a "role model for British women".

But she has worked hard to shake off this wholesome image, playing a northern stripper in the Granada film *Dancing Queen* and going to Hollywood to make *Mighty Aphrodite* with Woody Allen (he famously kept his shoes on for bedroom scenes). In the *Wings of the Dove* she was also required to undress. Her next appearance will be as a victim of motor neurone disease in the BBC's *The Theory of Flight*, opposite her boyfriend Kenneth Branagh. By her own admission she was "super-preoccupied", but claims she has left that behind. Her ambition first emerged at the age of 13 when she sent her photograph to an agent. At 17, she abandoned Cambridge to appear in the title role of Trevor Nunn's dismal film *Lady Jane Grey*.



William Hill odds on Helena Bonham Carter: 4-5

### Julie Christie (57)

Thirty years ago, Julie Christie was at the height of her powers as a 1960s icon, bewitching a generation of young men in films ranging from *Darling*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *Dr Zhivago* and *Don't Look Now*.

But for the last two decades, she has been confined to relative cinematic obscurity. She chose to make few films and those she did, such as a £100,000 women's rights movie were definitely offbeat. Her nomination for best actress for *Afterglow* suggests that she may have found a new market.

Born on a tea plantation in Assam, Christie was handed on to surrogate relatives in England before going on to convent school — she was thrown out for purveying a dirty joke.

Her break came with the hastily retitled *Billy Liar*. With her blonde hair, distinctive cheekbones and sexually confident air, she was cast as the unattainable beauty around whom Billy Fisher's fantasies revolve. She walked away with the film.

Then came *Darling*, the film which, to the massive audiences who crowded to see it, embodied the 1960s. For playing the somewhat incredible part of a model who casts off a husband, takes part in an orgy and has an abortion before marrying a prince, she won her first and only Oscar — a fact held by some to be a great Hollywood injustice.



William Hill odds on Julie Christie: 9-1

### Dame Judi Dench (63)

Recognised as the leading British actress of her generation, Dame Judi has already beaten off the newcomers of the movie world this year by picking up the Golden Globe best actress award for her portrayal of Queen Victoria in *Mrs Brown*.

Her strength is in her ability to defy typecasting, moving easily between roles in situation comedy, the theatre and film. In 1996, she made theatre history when she walked away with two prizes at the Laurence Olivier awards, winning both best actress in a musical and best actress.

Forty years after appearing for the first time at the Old Vic — she played a 23-year-old Ophelia for which the reviews were less than glowing — she is to return there to join Sir Peter Hall's company. Last year, she made *Mrs Brown* and returned to her role as icy mistress M in the latest *James Bond* film, *Tomorrow Never Dies*, while her BBC sitcom *As Time Goes By* with Geoffrey Palmer was commissioned for a seventh series.

Her mother was a Dubliner and her father spent his childhood and youth there, studying medicine at Trinity College. In 1970, she married actor Michael Williams. Their daughter, Finty, who was born two years later, has graduated from the same film school as her mother, and has already made her West End stage debut and a film.



William Hill odds on Judi Dench: 6-4

# British actresses take leading Oscar roles

Dan Glaister on the chances of the stars who shone in yesterday's nominations announced in Los Angeles

BRITAIN is almost certain to win at least one Oscar after dominating the best actress category in the nominations announced in Los Angeles yesterday. Helena Bonham Carter, Kate Winslet, Dame Judi Dench and Julie Christie were all named, with the American actress Helen Hunt.

Ms Bonham Carter, aged 31, received the nomination for her performance in the costume drama *The Wings of the Dove*, which also won a best adapted screenplay nomination for Hossein Amini.

She said: "Deep down I'm jubilant. For any screen actor it's a dream come true to be nominated. In practical terms it means your price goes up, you get a bigger choice of parts and the most exciting thing is you get glory, acclaim and peer group approval."

Dame Judi received a nomination for her performance as Queen Victoria in *Mrs Brown*, which had already given her a Hollywood Golden Globe for best actress, often seen as a reliable indicator of Oscar success. She said: "I'm completely shell-shocked and delighted. For once I'm lost for words."

The veteran actress, who rarely appears in films, is starring in *Amy's View* in the West End. She said she hoped to be able to negotiate a night off for the Oscar ceremony on March 23.

Kate Winslet, outsider for best actress for her role in *Titanic*, said: "I am very, very excited about this and thrilled for all the other nominees who I admire so much. It is great that *Titanic* has been acknowledged by the Academy in such an extraordinary way."

Julie Christie, aged 56, was nominated for the role of a faded actress in a troubled marriage in *Afterglow*. She was last nominated 26 years ago for *McCabe and Mrs Miller*, and won an Oscar for the 1965 film *Darling*.

The *Full Monty* was the

other notable British success in the nominations, receiving a mention for the coveted best picture category as well as three other nominations.

But it is the outsider in the main category where it faces the might of *Titanic*, which received 14 nominations, and *LA Confidential*, which received seven.

Umberto Passolini, producer of *The Full Monty*, said he was "absolutely gobsmacked". He said he did not think the film would win the best picture award.

"One has to count one's blessings and be very happy at the ability to touch so many people around the world with such a small and honest film. I have worked out that you could make 70 *Full Montys* for one *Titanic*."

The *Full Monty*, which cost \$3.5 million to make, has taken \$195 million worldwide. Passolini's wife is expecting a baby on the date of the Oscar ceremony.

*Titanic*, at \$300 million the most expensive film of all time, is on its way to becoming the most successful film at the box office and could become the most-garlanded film in Oscar history. The three-hour epic has taken over \$800 million worldwide, and its 14 nominations equals the record set by *All About Eve* in 1950.

*Titanic* has nominations for best picture, best director for James Cameron, best actress for Kate Winslet, best supporting actress for 87-year-old Gloria Stuart, and a series of minor awards.

LA Confidential received nominations for best picture and best director, as well as best screenplay and best supporting actress for Kim Basinger.

The bookmakers were in little doubt about the key awards. *Titanic* was put at 1-2 favourite by William Hill, LA Confidential was named as 2-1 second favourite, while *The Full Monty* trailed at 16-1. Helena Bonham Carter was quoted at 4-5 by William Hill.

with Judi Dench second favourite at 6-4.

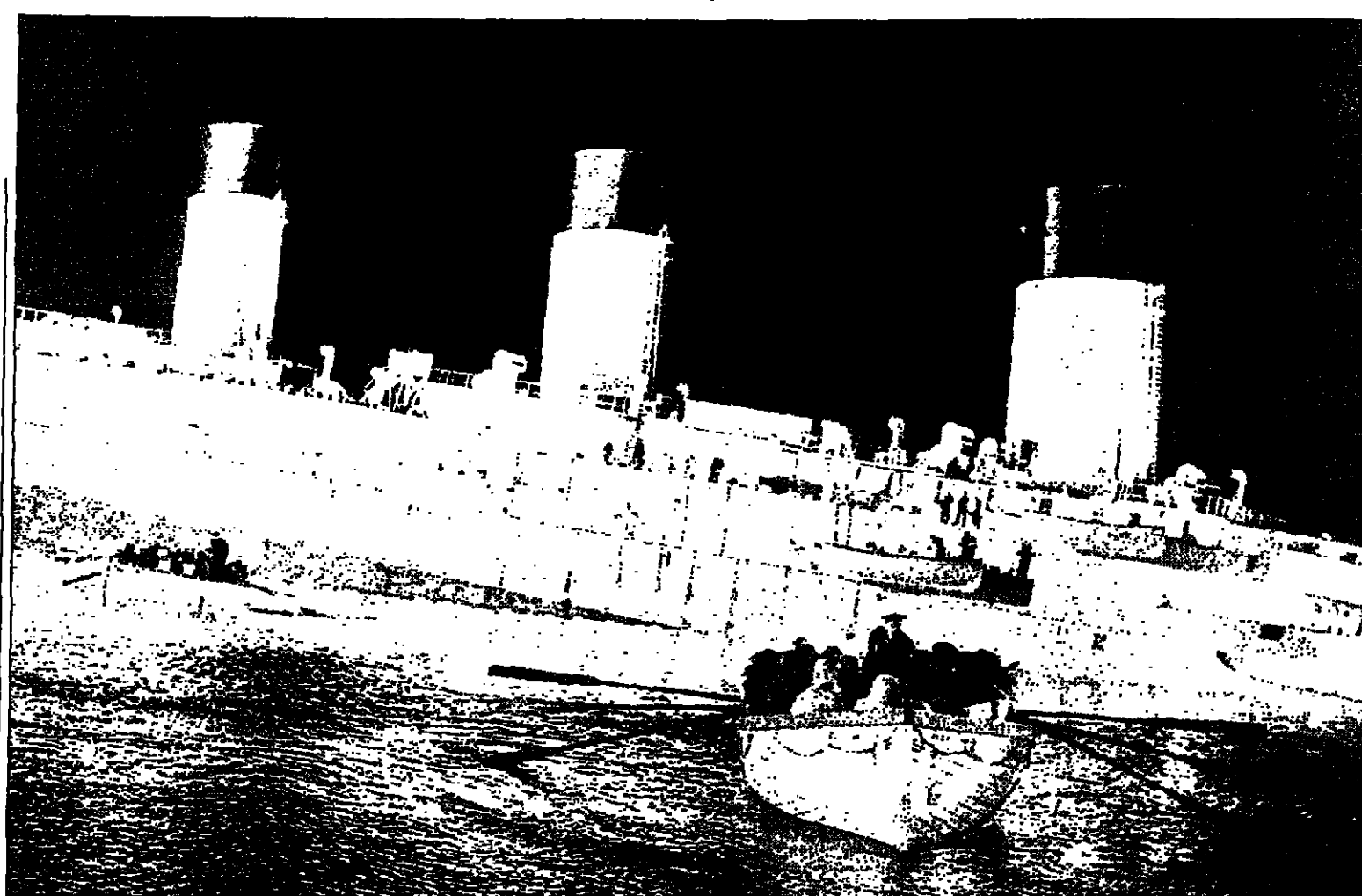
The only category where there seemed to be some uncertainty was in the best actor slot, where Jack Nicholson's performance in *As Good As It Gets* made him the 8-11 favourite for best actor with William Hill, followed by Robert Duvall in *The Apostle* at 100-30. Leadbrooks, however, quoted Peter Fonda as 5-4 favourite for his performance in *Ulee's Gold*.

Dance Lexie Dance, made by BBC Northern Ireland, was nominated for best live action short film, while *The Old Lady and the Pigeons*, made by BBC Bristol, was nominated for best animated short film.

Quentin Tarantino failed to repeat his Pulp Fiction success, as Jackie Brown received just one nomination, for best supporting actor, but the resurrection of John Travolta's career by Tarantino was repeated for Burt Reynolds, who received a best supporting actor nomination for his role in Paul Thomas Anderson's *Boogie Nights*.

Steven Spielberg's latest film, the slavery story *Amistad*, received only three nominations in minor categories, although Sir Anthony Hopkins was nominated for best supporting actor for his portrayal of US ex-president John Quincy Adams.

Derek Malcolm, G2, page 11



Titanic success... the most expensive film ever could become the most successful at the box office, and the most garlanded in Oscar history

### In the frame

**BEST PICTURE:** As Good As It Gets, The Full Monty, Good Will Hunting, LA Confidential, Titanic.

**BEST ACTOR:** Matt Damon, Good Will Hunting; Robert Duvall, The Apostle; Peter Fonda, Ulee's Gold; Dustin Hoffman, Wag the Dog; Jack Nicholson, As Good As It Gets.

**BEST ACTRESS:** Helena Bonham Carter, The Wings of the Dove; Julie Christie, Afterglow; Judi Dench, Mrs Brown; Helen Hunt, As Good As It Gets; Kate Winslet, Titanic.

**BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR:** Robert Forster, Jackie Brown; Anthony Hopkins, Amistad; Greg Kinnear, As Good As It Gets; Burt Reynolds, Boogie Nights; Robin Williams, Good Will Hunting.

**BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS:** Kim Basinger, LA Confidential; Joan Cusack, In and Out; Minnie Driver, Good Will Hunting; Julianne Moore, Boogie Nights; Gloria Stuart, Titanic.

**BEST DIRECTOR:** Peter Jackson, The Full Monty; Gas Van Sant, Good Will Hunting; Curtis Hanson, LA Confidential; Atom Egoyan, The Sweet Hereafter; James Cameron, Titanic.

## Children work for 33p an hour

Survey shows many youngsters have had job-related injuries

Seamus Milne  
Labour Editor

CHILDREN are working for up to 29 hours a week during school term-time and being paid hourly rates of as little as 33p, a survey by the Low Pay Unit has found.

A quarter of the 1,000 schoolchildren questioned who said they were employed were below the minimum legal working age of 13, and nearly half had suffered some kind of injury at work during the last year, the unit's director, Bharti Patel, said yesterday. One in 10 had received medical treatment for a work-related injury.

The first results of the survey of north Tyneside schoolchildren were released to support a private member's bill for better protection of working children, which is sponsored by the Labour MP and

veteran low-pay campaigner, Chris Pond, and is due to have its second reading on Friday.

The Government has agreed in principle to support the bill, which would limit the maximum working week for children to 12 hours during school term-time, in line with the rest of the European Union, and introduce a national system of regulation and enforcement.

The Government has not given any commitment to provide parliamentary time and its provisions are unlikely to see the light of day until the Government's review of child labour legislation is completed.

Among cases uncovered by the unit's survey was that of a 12-year-old boy delivering newspapers for £3 for a nine-hour week, and that of a 15-year-old girl who worked 29 hours a week at a cafe for £30. Just under a quarter of

those questioned, who were all aged from 10 to 16, were working, ranging from about 10 per cent of 10-year-olds to 35 per cent of 16-year-olds. Children from five middle and secondary schools across a representative social sample were questioned anonymously.

The unit's survey is in line with other research. A Mori survey for the TUC last year found that nearly a quarter of 11- and 12-year-olds in England and Wales are working illegally, and more than a quarter of schoolchildren with term-time jobs said they were often too tired to do homework as a result.

Under legislation dating back to the 1930s, children aged from 12 to 16 may be employed only outside school hours, between 7am and 7pm, and for no more than two hours on a school day or Sunday. There is no effective enforcement and local authority bylaws vary across the country.

A 1994 EU directive limited the working week for school-age children to 12 hours, but

the then Conservative government negotiated an opt-out to allow 12- to 16-year-olds to work up to 17 hours a week, with no limit for 15- to 16-year-olds, including night work.

The TUC and Low Pay Unit surveys show that only a minority of working children are now employed in what has traditionally been seen as children's work, such as paper rounds, and that all the children are likely to be doing the same kind of work as adults, particularly in the service sector.

Mr Pond said yesterday that the latest Low Pay Unit findings underlined the need for his bill.

The most recent Health and Safety Executive figures show that 46 school-age children suffered serious injuries at work in 1997-8. But that is widely regarded as underestimating the problem, because the extent of illegal child labour and the tendency to under-report accidents in the casual and part-time employment where children are concentrated.



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Nothing, as far as the Academy is concerned, succeeds like excess. And nominating James Cameron's *Titanic* 14 times, more than any other film since the far superior *All About Eve* in 1950, is certainly that.

Derek Malcolm on the Oscar nominations

G2 page 11





Gazza: an epic tale of stormy passions

## Gazza and Homer brought in to help drive to improve boys' literacy levels

Vivek Chaudhary  
Education Correspondent

ONE is an epic story of heroic proportions inspiring sentiments of admiration or revulsion at the adventures contained within its pages. The other is a classical work of literature and isn't a bad read either.

But between them, footballer Paul Gascoigne's biography and classical like *The Iliad* could help bridge the literacy gap between boys and girls. According to the Qualifications and Curriculum Agency (QCA) yesterday, parents, particularly fathers, should read books such as the biography of "Gazza" (formerly published as *He's Way the Lad*) written by Mel Streat, the footballer's agent, alongside the *Iliad*, written by the legendary bard Homer.

Nick Tate, head of the QCA, speaking at the launch of a report, which also involved the participation of the Basic Skills Agency, to try to high-

### Modern hero

"Go out there and get stuck in"  
— before the 1991 Spurs against Nottingham Forest FA Cup final

"I can't wait for the new year when I want to be running around like a big kid. I've had enough of crutches"  
— on his injury before joining Italian club Lazio

light boys achievement in English said: "It's (*The Iliad*) action-packed, it has bounce and rhythm and vitality and excitement and danger."

"And that is what is going to get a lot of boys interested in reading." While the QCA said that it could not comment on which of the two

### Ancient hero

"Bear me safe through this battle; do not leave me dead as you left Patroclus"

"Bury me quickly that I may cross the river; and let your bones lie with mine in the golden jar"

"My son, take food and sleep... Fear the gods and give back Hector's body for burial"

books young readers would find the most tragic, statistics show that boys lag behind girls in literacy from the beginning of their school lives.

By the age of 16, 65 per cent of girls achieve grade C or above in English compared with only 43 per cent of boys. Figures released last week by

the Government showed that 5 per cent more boys than girls reached national curriculum levels in English tests.

According to yesterday's report, Can do Better, boys liked different types of books to girls.

The report claims that in addition to books about Gazza, they prefer crime stories such as Sherlock Holmes and Raymond Chandler books and adventure and biography. Unlike girls, they do not like poetry.

Jim Pateman, of the Basic Skills Agency, said it had developed a series of books with publishers Hodder and Stoughton to get schoolboys interested in reading. Titles included biographies of Gazza, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Marilyn Monroe and the Spice Girls.

Mr Pateman said: "They are written for youngsters with poor reading skills, but they look like exciting books, not reading schemes, and they're the sort of things teenagers wouldn't be ashamed to be seen walking around with."



Hector: tragic hero in Homer's epic tale

## School meal ladies win £1.5m payout

Owen Bowcott

AROUND 400 Bedfordshire school dinner ladies yesterday won a combined payout of £1.5 million in a case further limiting employers' ability to enforce wage cuts.

The industrial tribunal victory, which will bring them each between £2,000 and £4,000 in back pay, follows a series of judicial defeats for local councils. The women had complained that Bedfordshire County Council breached the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act by cutting the their wages, holiday entitlements and sick pay four years ago.

Rodney Bickerstaffe, general secretary of Unison, claimed that the settlement was a "major victory". He said: "It sends a clear message to Bedfordshire County Council and other employers that they cannot arbitrarily pick on their women staff when they are carrying out compulsory competitive tendering exercises."

One of the women involved, Irene Ferris, a kitchen man-

ager at the John Bunyan school in Bedford, said that her pay had been reduced by 50p an hour. Including other cuts she lost £3,000 a year.

"I work in a very busy kitchen and I believe you should get a fair rate of pay for a fair day's work," she said. "It is always the people on the shop floor who bear the brunt of any cuts."

Jan Turner, who works at Caldecote Lower School, said: "I couldn't understand how the council could cut everyone's pay, especially when they said they would get no pay for public holidays."

The agreement between Bedfordshire and the two unions involved, Unison and the GMB, follows similar victories in 1995 and 1996 in Cleveland and North Yorkshire.

Cases against other councils are still being argued. Changes in competitive tendering policy are being considered, allowing employers to consider quality of service and equal opportunities issues — rather than merely lowest price — when awarding service contracts.

John Edmunds, general sec-

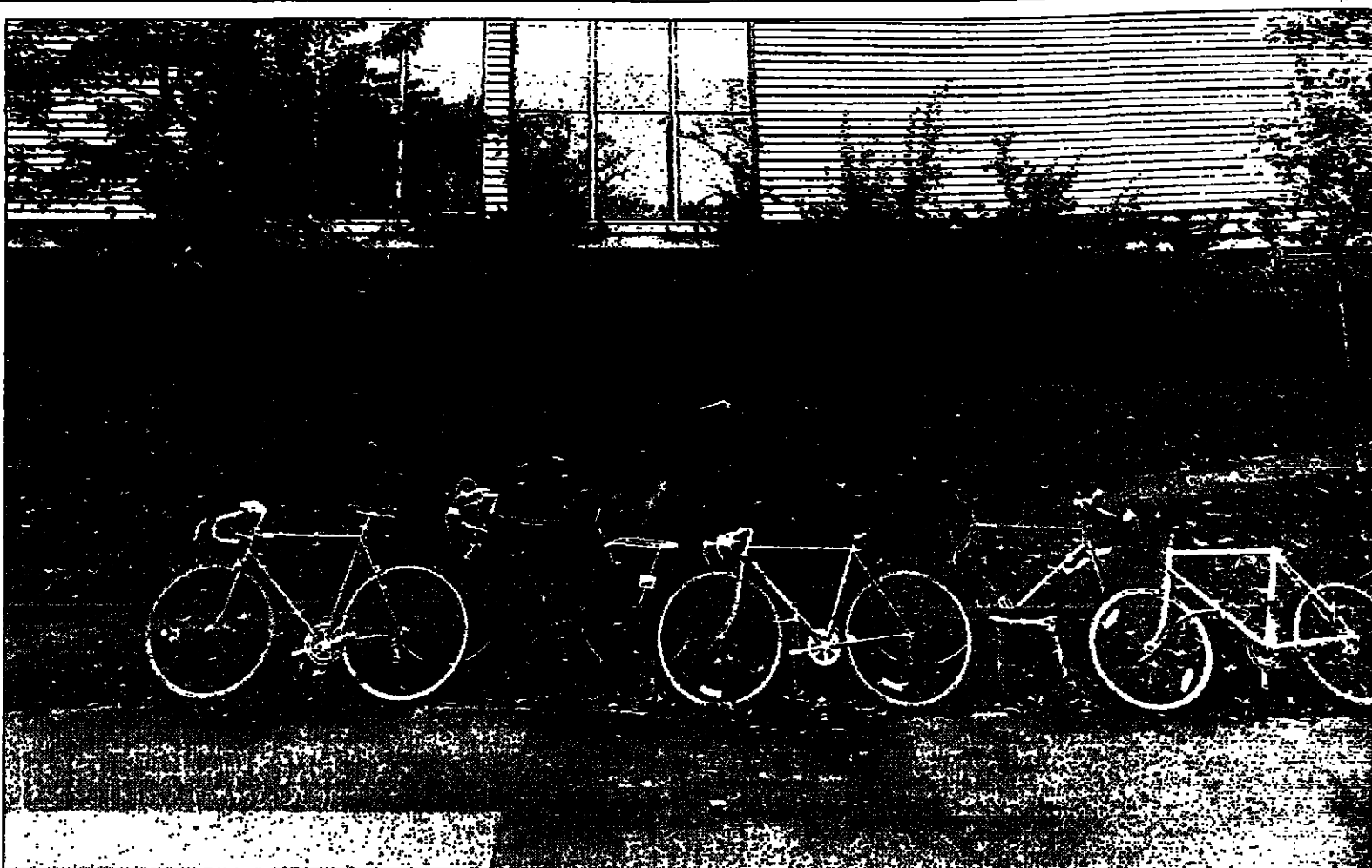
retary of the GMB, said yesterday: "Once again an employer has tried to make our members pay the price for privatisations and once again the law has defended their rights."

The women's money has been protected by equal pay legislation, which proves the need for stronger employment rights to stop unscrupulous employers taking advantage of workers."

A spokesman for Bedfordshire County Council said that settlement terms were agreed between the council and the unions and were accepted by the industrial tribunal.

The county council reduced women's pay by up to a third in the summer of 1994 to make the school meals service more competitive and beat off outside competition. The service remained in-house but the pay and conditions of the 1,300 mainly women workers were hit.

Yesterday's settlement may eventually cost the county council between £3 and £4 million. Previous pay and conditions have been reinstated for other workers.



Middlesex university boasted of educating people since 1878 — an allusion to a college on the site of one of the campus buildings PHOTOGRAPH: GARRY WEAVER

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## Ad monitors hit at college 'hype'

Kamal Ahmed  
Media Correspondent

NEW universities guilty of making inflated claims for their institutions in a "scramble for students" have been criticised by the Advertising Standards Authority.

The ASA said adverts for universities and further education colleges often contained claims of academic excellence which could not be backed up by independent evidence.

The authority, which polices adverts in the press and on billboards, warned that students could be misled by the misuse of statistics and claims of "100 per cent pass rates" or that the course on offer was the best in Britain.

The report also criticises supermarkets which make unfair "shopping basket" price comparisons with competitors and Barclays Bank for an advertisement aimed at teenagers which encouraged "irresponsible" behaviour.

"In an increasingly competitive market place colleges and universities have resorted to advertising their wares," said Chris Reid, spokesman for the ASA.

### Degrees of deception

Manchester Metropolitan University  
Formerly Known as: Manchester Polytechnic  
Claim: Offers "The UK's leading Public Relations Master's Degree"  
Fact: There are only two such courses in Britain — and the university could not substantiate that it was the best

Middlesex University  
Formerly Known as: Middlesex Polytechnic  
Claim: "Educating People Since 1878"  
Fact: Middlesex Polytechnic became a university in 1992. St Katherine's College.

"There is nothing wrong with that but just as with other products there are strict rules about what you can and cannot claim and they have to play within them."

The report reignites the debate over the increasingly fraught fight for students sparked by the rapid expansion of universities in the early 1990s.

Many disciplines, particu-

originally on the site of one part of the campus, was founded in 1878 but disappeared in 1964

St Margaret's, Oxford  
Claim: "St Margaret's Easter Revision Course at Oxford University"  
Fact: There is no connection with Oxford University. St Margaret's argued some of the courses "took place" in Oxford colleges.

The Rutland College  
Claim: "For ETEC courses the college has had 100 per cent pass rate for the last 5 years"  
Fact: Only seven students had taken the course.

lary new ones such as media studies, now offer more places than there are students who want to take them. If universities do not encourage enough candidates to the courses they will go bust.

The authority pointed out that in September 1997 Middlesex University in west London, claimed that it had been educating people since 1878. In fact the polytechnic only

became a university in 1992 — the 1878 date referred to a college which had once stood on the site of one of the present campus buildings.

A Middlesex university spokesman said the history of the university could be traced back to St Katherine's College which was founded more than 100 years ago.

"We were emphasising that those traditional values still hold true," he said.

In a separate development the ASA report also criticised the Tesco supermarket chain for claims that it had cheaper prices than Sainsbury's.

The report said that the advert: "You're quids in if you shop at Tesco" was misleading as the store had chosen specially discounted foods to make the comparison.

The ASA also said an advert for Barclays Bank which ran in the teenage magazine J17 was likely to encourage "irresponsible or anti-social behaviour".

The advert, headlined: "10 things you should have done before you're 18", included advice to "stay out all night (without ringing home)".

Barclays Bank said the advert was supposed to be tongue-in-cheek but had been withdrawn.

## Queen ordered hairdresser to be given the chop 'nicely'

Rory Carroll

THE Queen fired her hairdresser but wanted her involvement in the matter covered up, an employment tribunal heard yesterday.

The Queen also asked for Paul Burgess to be sacked sensitively, allegedly saying: "Please put it nicely and don't upset him."

Mr Burgess, who was dismissed in July from his £100, one-day-a-week task of trimming the royal coiffure, yesterday lost his claim for unfair dismissal.

Vicky Schaverien, a managing director of the Steiner hairdressing group, said she broke the news to Mr Burgess. "We were told she wanted a replacement — I did my duty to the Queen and to Steiner. We were not given any options by the Queen as to whether we liked her decision. I was told by the Queen not to mention it was her decision."

The Bristol tribunal heard that Mr Burgess, in his mid-30s, travelled 120 miles from his salon in Cheltenham to the royal palaces and accompanied the Queen abroad.

Ms Schaverien said she told him the dismissal was due to complications over transferring the salon from Steiner to another company, Regis. "I thought it was fair to not bring this out as a big deal and a humiliating decision. I didn't want to tell him the Queen didn't want him any more."

Mr Burgess said he was shocked to be dismissed. "All I could think was my replacement would not see how I would cut the Queen's hair and this would cause problems."

The tribunal chairman said the claim for unfair dismissal failed because losing the Queen as a client may have lost Mr Burgess money but did not constitute dismissal from Regis.

Mr Burgess refused to comment after the hearing.

## Bronze Age Yorkshiremen beat Swedes and Turks to the sauna

Tim Radford  
Science Editor

BRONZE Age Yorkshiremen may have stolen a march on the Turks and taken the plunge thousands of years ahead of the Swedes. They invented the Turkish bath or the sauna more than 3,000 years ago, if 64 untidy heaps of stone are anything to go by.

The stones, or burned mounds, have been traced across the Yorkshire Dales and identified by Tim Laurie, an archaeologist, as dating from between 1000 and 1500 BC.

Mr Laurie said: "In pre-history a hot bath would have been really appreciated. They had few pleasures and this was one of them. I believe these mounds were bathing places, perhaps medicinal and for cleansing."

The mounds are oval or

horseshoe-shaped piles of stones which show signs of having been burned. They are, says Neil Camping of the North Yorkshire heritage unit, usually centred round a small cistern, usually near a stream. This would be covered with skin or branches.

"They'd have a fire outside, heat up rocks and put them into the cistern, producing lots of steam. When the rocks cooled down, they'd just throw them outside and that's how the mounds got built up."

The people who hunted across the Dales 3,000 years ago would have been Celts, and Celtic literature mentions a hot bath. There is evidence of Bronze Age steam baths in Ireland.

The Romans and the Greeks used to relax in their own forms of sauna. But the prehistoric Dalesmen were in a lather at least 1,000 years ahead of them.

The Guardian Wednesday February 11 1998  
**Bomb case man clear**

Duncan Campbell at the

A

Third sex at

Red carpet for Charles  
Veils refugee misery  
in Bhutan



# Bomb case man cleared

Duncan Campbell at the Docklands trial

A MAN accused of playing a part in the IRA Docklands bombing in 1996 was yesterday cleared at the Old Bailey after the judge ruled there was insufficient evidence against him.

Then, after Patrick McKinley had walked out of the dock and left the court, his co-accused went into the witness box to blame the bombing on an IRA man he called "the boss", whom he said he could not name for fear of what might happen to his family.

Mr McKinley, aged 34, a garage owner from Newry, Co Down, was formally acquitted by the jury after the judge, Mr Justice Blotfield, said it would be wrong for the case to continue. Mr McKinley's barrister, Michael Mansfield QC, had earlier submitted that his client had no case to answer.

The judge said the case against Mr McKinley, who had been accused of converting a lorry into a bomb transporter, had substantially altered since the trial began almost a month. While certain facts raised suspicions against him, "suspicion alone is insufficient".

The court heard that the police who interviewed Mr McKinley after his arrest had been under pressure because they could only hold him for a

certain amount of time. Their questions were "confused and muddled," said the judge, and had been based on a false premise. They had mistakenly accused Mr McKinley of lying about the conversion of the lorry that was used for the bomb, he added.

Outside the court, Mr McKinley said he was "very pleased and very relieved" that his case was over. He said he would be returning to his home today.

His co-accused, James McCordle, aged 30, from Crossmaglen in South Armagh, went into the witness box to tell the jury he had driven the bomb lorry from Northern Ireland to England but had not known it contained explosives. He said he had not taken the lorry to Docklands, but had handed it over to another driver.

Mr McCordle is pleading not guilty to conspiring to cause explosions, and not guilty to murdering newsagent Inam Bashir and his assistant John Jeffries, who both died in the blast.

He told the jury that he lives with his parents and his sister in Crossmaglen and that he had left school at 15 or 16 and had trained as a bricklayer. He had worked at that trade and also on farms and as a lorry driver. He told his counsel, Edward Fitzgerald



Patrick McKinley: freed by Old Bailey judge after being charged with converting IRA bomb lorry

QC, that he used a false name when working because he was signing on at the same time.

A man he called "the boss" had asked him to take a lorry to Carlisle in January 1996, he said. He had done previous illegal jobs for the man, whom he knew to be in the IRA, such as smuggling goods from the Northern Ireland to the republic, he told the court.

He drove the lorry over in January 1996, when cars had been bought at an auction in

Carlisle and been brought back. He had been asked to carry out a second run and assumed the same thing would happen again, he said.

"He said it was going to be a wee bit different," said Mr McCordle. "He was going to keep the lorry in England this time. He showed me where to go. He said there'd be another driver there to take over from me."

Mr McCordle added: "I did not know it was an IRA operation or that there were explo-

sives on board." On his second trip with the lorry, he had eventually met up with "the boss" and another man who took over as the driver. He said he had then been given a lift home by another lorry driver whose name he did not know.

He said that he had been worried after the bomb had exploded because he realised his fingerprints might be on the lorry. Asked to explain why he had made no comment to the police after his

arrest, he said that it had been because of legal advice and a medical condition.

Cross-examined by prosecuting counsel, John Bevan QC, Mr McCordle said he was not prepared to name "the boss". He added: "I can't tell you the boss's name because of where I live. He's a neighbour of mine. Where I live, you just don't tell people names. I'm not putting my family at risk over this man's name."

The case continues.

## News in brief

### Probation for drink drive ex-police chief

A FORMER deputy chief constable was placed on probation for a year yesterday after he pleaded guilty to driving with more than three times the legal level of alcohol in his blood.

David Howe, aged 51, of Kendal, Cumbria, who retired from Merseyside police in 1995, was banned from driving for 31 months and ordered to pay £40 costs.

Kendal magistrates were told that Howe was arrested two days before Christmas after crashing his car near his home. A breath test showed he had 130mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood; the legal limit is 35mg per 100ml.

The court heard that Howe was arrested and taken to Kendal police station where his breath test proved positive. He pleaded guilty at an earlier hearing and has since successfully completed a drink dependency programme. — David Ward

### Return to car 'joy-sticks' plea

CAR makers were yesterday urged to design vehicles without steering wheels to cut the risk of accident injuries. The AA said vehicles would be safer if instead of steering wheels they had aircraft-style joysticks similar to those on the first cars.

The call comes as preparations are finalised to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first death of a car driver in a road accident on February 13.

John Stubbs, the AA's head of technical policy, said: "Concept cars using joystick-type steering devices have already been produced."

But Gordon Bacon, assistant director of engineering at the Motor Industry Research Association in Nuneaton, Warwickshire, said: "The problem is it's not a natural sort of movement for people driving a car, not as natural as turning a wheel."

### Ice case 'wastes' court space

A FATHER yesterday condemned his son's prosecution for making an ice-slide on a road as a "waste of time" after the 14-year-old boy was given an absolute discharge by magistrates.

The teenager was arrested in December after buckets of water on a road outside his home in Selby, north Yorkshire, with a group of friends. He was charged and pleaded guilty to endangering road users, appearing at a youth court twice before he was finally discharged yesterday by York magistrates.

The court heard that the teenager was warned by the police not to throw water on the road and was arrested when he continued. His father said: "I feel very angry about it. They'll want planning permission for building a snowman next."

### Pilot settles with golf club

PILOT Christopher Lankey yesterday settled his High Court action with a golf club over his expulsion after he yelled a comment about a "cheating Irish bastard" at a prizegiving.

Mr Justice Buckley was told that the proceedings were to be stayed as the Belling Golf Club, west London, accepted that Mr Lankey did not intend his remark in August 1995 to be racist or offensive. Mr Lankey, aged 48, from Bayswater, west London, agreed to resign his membership of the club and not revisit. "I said he had been led to believe that he had a right to play for the 'joke', aimed at a friend's golfing handicap, was the end of the matter. The club had argued that Mr Lankey's expulsion in September 1995 was inevitable given a history of suspensions and warnings. Each side agreed to pay its own costs.

### Car servicing 'overpriced'

MOTORISTS are being "systematically overcharged" by garages for car servicing, according to a survey published today. Main dealers are the worst offenders with exaggerated labour times logged for fitting new parts.

Of 40 garages contacted by Autocar magazine, some over-charged official rates recommended by manufacturers by nearly 40 per cent — 24 minutes in every hour. More than half the garages quoted "wildly excessive" labour times. Specialist garages came out better with overcharging averaging at six minutes an hour.

The Retail Motor Industry Federation, which represents the motor repair industry said the results of the survey were surprising.

### Paradise lost . . . regained

TWO National Lottery winners yesterday told how they nearly lost a jackpot of £2.4 million after throwing their winning ticket into the dustbin. Colin and Agnes Stewart, of Haddington, East Lothian, only discovered they had won after reading press reports that the cash had yet to be claimed.

The couple were abroad when the Christmas Eve draw was made and had forgotten to check after returning in January.

Last Friday, unaware that she and her husband were millionaires, Mrs Stewart cleaned out her handbag and put the lottery tickets into a bin. But the tickets were later found.

## Third sex attack in two weeks on Sussex rail users

Boy, 16, is robbed at knifepoint and made to strip in toilet cubicle

Rory Carroll

A BOY of 16 has been sexually assaulted at knifepoint in the toilet of a London-bound train, in the third attack on a Sussex rail traveller in a fortnight.

A man with a six- or seven-inch blade bundled the boy into the cubicle on Saturday's 4pm Hastings to Victoria train, and demanded money before ordering him to strip.

The victim, who was returning home, was unable to get off at his stop at Haywards Heath in West Sussex, and travelled to Victoria be-

fore returning to Haywards Heath and telling his parents, who took him to a police station. He was later counselled at a rape suite.

He described the attacker as Afro-Caribbean with a Jamaican accent, in his 20s, 5ft 10in tall and of athletic build. He wore sunglasses and a blue and grey patterned baseball cap. The knife had a black handle.

A police spokesman said the victim was subjected to a serious sexual assault. He added that he is "as well as can be expected, and being comforted by his family".

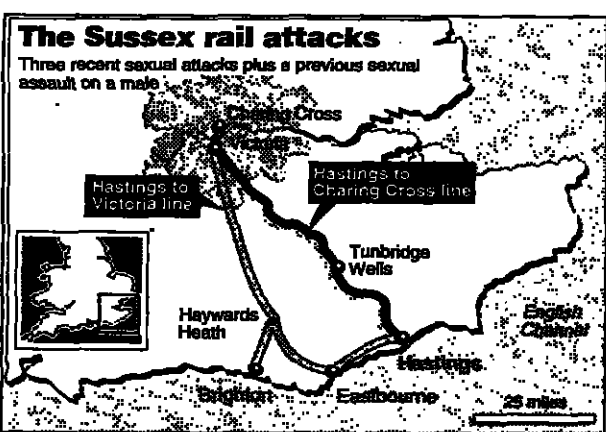
The assault follows two

recent sex attacks on Sussex rail travellers and an earlier one on a crippled man.

On January 25, a 19-year-old Czech student was found unconscious in a blood-drenched toilet cubicle of the 1.11pm Hastings to Charing Cross, London, train. She had been sexually assaulted and beaten before the train reached Tunbridge Wells in Kent at 2pm.

The victim, who was unable to remember the attack or the hours leading up to it, has returned home to her family, police said yesterday. Police have released pictures and video clips of her in an attempt to jog the memories of potential witnesses.

Shortly after midnight on January 26, just hours after the Czech student was found,



a 15-year-old girl was raped on the seat after leaving Hastings station. She and her attacker had boarded the

Transport police to try to establish if the two attacks were linked. However, they have ruled out a connection with Saturday's assault.

On New Year's Day 1996, a 30-year-old man disabled with motor neurone disease was sexually assaulted on the 8.43pm Brighton to Bedford Thameslink train.

Bill Clements, chairman of East Sussex county council's community services committee, said yesterday: "Obviously we hope there is not a pattern here and that these are isolated cases."

A transport police spokesman said rail travellers to avoid sitting in carriages with just one other person. "If you are worried, move to another carriage with more people," he said.

## Red carpet for Charles veils refugee misery in Bhutan

Luke Harding on prince's tour

ON THE second day of his visit to one of the world's last feudal states, Prince Charles was greeted yesterday with a red carpet decorated with lucky symbols in coloured rice before tucking into lunch with King Wangchuck of Bhutan. "I'm so happy to have you here," the king said, as the prince bowed deeply.

Two hundred miles away, across tea gardens and a landscape of paddy fields, Tul Birsing was sitting on a stool wondering when he might be allowed to return home to his farm.

Gurung is one of 40,000 Bhutanese refugees languishing in Beldangi refugee camp, a cleared tract of jungle in the rainy flatlands of eastern



Dancers in traditional dress escort Prince Charles on his visit to the Bhutan capital Thimphu, for lunch with King Wangchuck

Nepal that Prince Charles will not see on his Asian tour. Gurung's forefathers had migrated from Nepal to Bhutan, encouraged by the British, who wanted labour for tea plantations.

But he was forced to leave Bhutan after the king introduced a "one nation, one people" policy in 1989, a form of ethnic cleansing.

King Wangchuck continues to preside over this tiny medieval kingdom where democracy and television, blue jeans and other western influences are banned.

The refugees' plight was not on the agenda yesterday as

the king entertained Prince Charles at the Queen Mother's royal residence, Dechencholing Palace. They had already spent 80 minutes in conversation at the Tashichho Dzong, an 18th century Buddhist fortress monastery, now the seat of government in Thimphu, Bhutan's sleepy capital.

The prince's car was greeted by a spectacular procession of dancers, musicians, and chanting monks in red robes. A devotee of homeopathic cures, his first engagement of the day was at an institute of traditional medicine.

While Charles was inspect-

ing the medicinal preparations, Bhutan's long-serving foreign minister Dawa Tsering was dismissing as "exaggerated" claims made by the refugees. But back at the camp Chandra Khanda, another refugee, invited Prince Charles to come and see for himself. "He should come here and see how we are living," she said. "He doesn't see the physical conditions. He doesn't see the reality here," she said.

Chandra, 27, was sacked from her government job and driven out because she was not a member of Bhutan's ruling ethnic elite, the Drukpas.

At least she was not tor-

tured. Bhanu Adhufkara, a civil servant, was hung upside down, beaten and had pins inserted under his fingernails. He was suspected — wrongly — of taking part in a pro-democracy demonstration. "Prince Charles should pressurise the Government of Bhutan to repatriate his subjects and restore fundamental human rights," he said.

The prince had already been briefed that Bhutan has the highest per capita number of refugees in the world. One sixth of the population has been driven out by King Wangchuck. Seven years after their expulsion, they are still in exile.

It was Britain that invented Bhutan's absolute monarchy in 1907, when it enthroned the first Wangchuck king.

During his stay, Prince Charles will not visit the deserted villages in southern Bhutan, however, which are being resettled by government-sponsored northerners. Nor will he meet the 219 Nepalese-speaking doctors and engineers who were sacked last month from their posts.

He will go trekking in the Himalayan hills today. There he will sketch and paint before flying home tomorrow at the end of a 10-day tour.

The refugees meanwhile will continue to wait.

## Franco-Belgian trawler rage in English Channel



Lucy Patton

IT TOOK the might of the British and French navies and several coastguard teams to sort out a spat between French and Belgian trawlers in the English Channel yesterday.

The incident, described as a case of trawler rage by a coastguard, began around 7am. Dover coastguards, HMS Guernsey and the French naval ship Geranium were alerted after at least eight French trawlers immobilised the Belgian vessel Asterias, one of three that had allegedly carved their way through the Frenchmen's nets.

The alarm was raised by Dover coastguard after the Belgian boat radioed that its propeller had been deliberately fouled by French trawlers, who had fired distress rockets on to its stern. For several hours the French boats surrounded the Asterias in fog eight miles off Dungeness before eventually agreeing to release her.

The Dungeness lifeboat was launched and shipping in the south west Channel lane alerted to look out for the cluster of boats.

HMS Guernsey sailed to investigate the incident. A Ministry of Defence spokesman said: "Although no British boats were involved, it was in our territorial waters, so we always like to assist."

A spokesman for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said: "The situation had been calmed by the French protection vessel by the time HMS Guernsey got there. A diver cleared the propeller of the Asterias."

The row, over fishing territories within European limits, had been going on off Dunkirk for some months and had spilled over into British waters, said Eric Musson, a Dover coastguard spokesman.

French, Belgian and British vessels were at sea for the start of the lucrative Dover sole season. Paul Hodges of Dungeness, who was fishing two miles from the incident, said: "The French boats took the Belgian trawler hostage. What we had was a war inside British territorial waters."

A spokesman for the French coastguard at Cap Gris Nez said French nets had been destroyed by the Belgian boat. "The French fishermen were very angry and wanted to make trouble for the Belgian trawler."

"The situation is now quite calm, and the trawler is proceeding to Belgium. We have now to discuss with Belgian authorities payment for the destruction of the nets."



## Iraq crisis

# Annan pleads for 'wisdom'

## UN

Mark Tran in New York and Ian Black in London

**T**HE United Nations secretary-general Kofi Annan appealed yesterday for "courage and wisdom" on Iraq as he became the focal point of diplomatic efforts to avert an American military onslaught.

Mr Annan, worried about air strikes, said the hour for diplomacy was not past and urged all sides to drop "purist or fundamentalist positions", otherwise, "we will not find a

solution". Using language that will infuriate the US and Britain, he signalled readiness to be flexible in interpreting resolutions demanding access for UN Special Commission (Unscom) inspectors seeking to identify and eliminate Iraq's biological and chemical weapons.

"I think that [full compliance] is the position now and the position today. It does not mean that, depending on what can be worked out, that would be the position tomorrow," he said.

Robin Cook, the foreign secretary, immediately said there was no question of watering down UN resolutions. "If the Security Council backs off on this occasion, it

will have no credibility the next time," he said.

Senior British officials were unhappy with the implied rebuke: "I hope that what he [Annan] is exploring is how to get a proper inspection regime for Unscom in these circumstances," said one.

"We have no purism other than the purism of what the UN needs to do its job," Mr Annan said. Iraq's leaders "had painted themselves into a corner and we need to work with them to get them to back down, but I think we should not insist on humiliating them."

The UN chief has cancelled a trip to the Middle East to deal with Iraq, the gravest problem he has faced since

taking his job over a year ago. Aides say he believes the UN's credibility would be fatally damaged if diplomacy gave way to what he has warned would be "devastating" attacks.

In recent days, he has conferred with Nizar Hamdoun, Iraq's ambassador to the UN, Sergey Lavrov, the Russian envoy, and Richard Butler, the UNscom chief. Yesterday, he again saw Mr Butler and Alain Dejammet, the French envoy to the UN. Mr Annan is fine-tuning a plan by Russia and the Arab League that would allow UN access to 68 sites where material for Iraq's weapons of mass destruction may be stored.

"He hopes to weave these strands together into a package acceptable to the council as a whole as a basis for discussions with Iraq," said Fred Eckhard, the UN spokesman. UN sources said Mr Annan could go to Baghdad if a credible deal were offered. Mr Cook sounded sceptical about the worth of such a trip.

On the rub of the current deadline, the Russian-Arab plan calls for Mr Annan to appoint someone to lead a new committee to inspect eight presidential compounds and the demolition of Mr Butler, an Australian diplomat, to vice chairman. Mr Butler has been accused by China, France and Russia of inflaming relations between Baghdad and the UN with his confrontational style.

The US and Britain are unimpressed with the proposals. But a Foreign Office source said last night that detailed comments on them had been passed to Russia and the Arab League. London will accept additions to Unscom to assuage Iraqi sensitivities about its sovereignty, but not any weakening of its authority.

Britain hopes to submit a draft of a new UN resolution to the Security Council this week. Co-sponsored by Japan, it would condemn Saddam Hussein and clear the way for military action. But officials said timing was crucial in the face of Russian objections.

Leader comment, letters, page 9; Analysis, page 11

## Key role for British forces

## Military

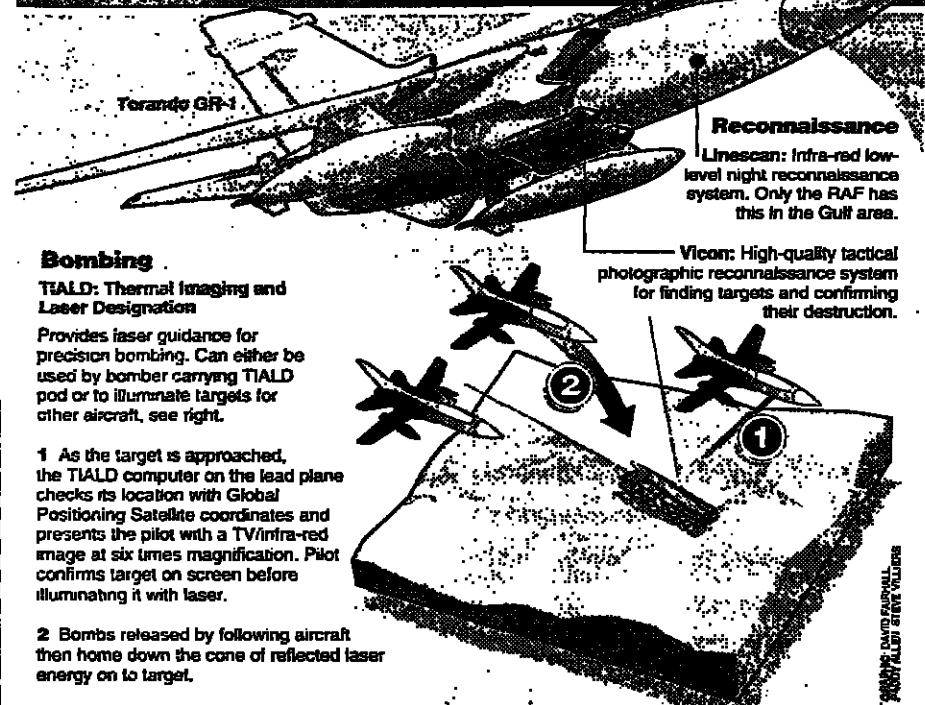
David Fairhall  
Defence Correspondent

**B**RITISH forces have been deployed in the Gulf to provide military evidence of the political support Britain is offering President Bill Clinton in his confrontation with Saddam Hussein.

If air strikes are launched against Iraq, as seems increasingly likely, the Americans could do the job without us. But the British forces have been chosen to play an active role, and in one respect — low-level night reconnaissance and quality medium-level photo-reconnaissance — they offer a unique capability that US commanders will appreciate.

Reconnaissance will be vital to the final phases of

### British forces in the Gulf



target planning, for example, to locate mobile air defence systems or last-minute signs of weapons being hidden from United Nations inspectors. It will also be valuable in the aftermath of the first wave of air strikes, to check whether particular targets have been destroyed or need, in

the grim jargon of air warfare, to be "revisited".

Before the crisis, the RAF had six Tornado GR1s equipped for various forms of reconnaissance and bombing, at Al Khafji in Saudi Arabia, to help monitor the no-fly zone over southern Iraq. But without Saudi permission, which has not been given, these

could not be used for offensive operations.

Hence the early decision to deploy the aircraft carrier *Invincible* to the Gulf, with some RAF Harrier GR7s equipped for precision bombing which could operate independently of Arab air fields, and could be seen by President Saddam to have that indepen-

dence. It sent a clear political signal.

Since then, Kuwait has given permission for RAF Tornados to operate from Al Salim. And eight Harriers deployed there earlier this week from RAF Bruggen, in Germany, trained to use the TIALD laser bombing system — the GR7s on board *Invincible* did not at

first have TIALD, making them dependent on US laser guidance, but two modified aircraft have since been sent. All these aircraft can be refuelled in the air.

*Invincible* has two escorts, HMS Nottingham and HMS Coventry, which were already in the Gulf as part of the permanent Armilla patrol.

## Mubarak fears shockwave of nationalism in Arab world

## Egypt

Julian Borger in Cairo

**T**HE bombing of Iraq could trigger a shock wave of Islamic militancy and Arab nationalism across the region, destabilising secular Arab governments and overturning the Middle East process, Egyptian officials and commentators said yesterday.

One government official said a possible side-effect of US and British air strikes could be the cessation of the tenuous links established in recent years between Egypt and Israel, such as air links and limited trade, under pressure from a rising wave of Arab outrage.

He said President Hosni Mubarak expressed these concerns to Madeleine Albright, the US secretary of state, when she came to Cairo last week to rally Egyptian support for, or at least understanding of, the US threat of force to impose UN weapons inspections on Iraq. The official said Ms Albright had no response.

"It was as if the decision had already been taken, and she was simply informing us," he said.

The Egyptian government is backing a diplomatic initiative spearheaded by the Cairo-based Arab League, in conjunction with France and Russia. Under proposals set out on Monday by Esmat Abdel-Meguid, the organisation's secretary-general, Saddam Hussein would open his

controversial palace compounds to UN inspectors looking for biological and chemical weapons.

The conditions imposed on the inspections, stipulating when they could take place and who would carry them out, were quickly rejected by US and British officials. But Arab League and Egyptian representatives say that it is too early to abandon the initiative, which is due to be presented to the United Nations Security Council in days.

Osama El-Chazali Harb, the editor of the Al-Siasa Al-Dawliya political journal, said: "This is a first step in a bargain. You must allow time for bargaining."

The 22-member Arab

**'This is the first step in a bargain. You must allow time for bargaining'**

League was the perfect vehicle to deliver a face-saving compromise. "It allows Saddam to tell his people 'I would not give in to America, but my Arab brothers pleaded with me, and out of respect for Arab brotherhood, I agreed,'" Mr Harb said.

The Cairo media has unanimously condemned the US-British threat of force, mostly portraying it as an attempt by President Bill Clinton to distract attention from the Washington sex scandal. The Al-Ahram newspaper also appeared to allude to Robin Cook's domestic problems:

"The similarity between the scandals in Britain and the US may explain the circumstances behind decisions of London and Washington."

Hani Shukrallah, the editor of Al-Ahram's English-language weekly edition, said most Egyptians believed Iraq should be subjected to the same inspections and sanctions as Iraq.

"For Egyptian public opinion, Israel is the threat. It has a huge stockpile of weapons, and one of the best military machines in the world," Mr Shukrallah said.

"If the bombing starts, you will get a reaction. You will get people rising up across the Arab world, and this may get out of hand. If Israel shoots back, you can imagine what effect that will have."

Egypt is struggling to control Islamic fundamentalism, after Egyptian extremists killed 58 foreign tourists at Luxor in November. Hala Mostafa, a political analyst and expert on Islamic militancy, said that an attack on Iraq would cause the tide of radicalism to burst its banks.

"It could bring an alliance between the Muslim Brotherhood (an Islamic radical group) and nationalists," Ms Mostafa said. The pressure would force moderate, secular Arab regimes like Egypt and Jordan to rethink their tentative steps towards normalising ties with Israel, she said.

Mohamed El-Awa, a lawyer and Islamic activist, said: "I don't think regimes like Jordan and Egypt will remain for long. Their fall will come quickly within one or two years, as a direct effect of the bombing of Iraq."

## Support

Michael White in London, Martin Kettle in Washington

**T**ONY Blair's insistence that Iraq must comply with United Nations weapons inspection requirements or face air attack last night won the support of his predecessor, John Major, who took Britain into the Gulf war in 1991.

After a day in which the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, stressed the need for

ried the lack of clear objectives — such as destruction of designated sites — for a potential attack.

In an interview on CNN's Larry King Live, days after his high-profile visit to Washington, the Prime Minister also took a tough line. "You're not dealing with a democratically elected leader, you're dealing with an utterly unscrupulous dictator who has murdered many of his own people and, though it is a huge responsibility — and I cannot tell you how seriously it weighs upon me — I believe we are justified if he won't come back into line and allow the weapons inspectors to do their job," said Mr Blair.

Leftwing MPs, including Tony Benn and Tam Dalyell, both veteran critics of American foreign policy, insist that the prospective action is illegal and divisive, as few of the Gulf war allies have backed military action this time.

But yesterday Mr Blair met his Spanish counterpart, José María Aznar, and won guarded support for keeping up the pressure. Canada, Australia and Germany had also endorsed the Anglo-US stance in the past 24 hours, he later told CNN. Canada said it would send a frigate, two Hercules transport aircraft and 300 to 400 troops, while Australia has pledged SAS search and rescue teams and two Boeing 707s for refuelling.

In the Commons the Blair-Cook stance won the guarded support of the Conservative and Liberal-Democrat front benches, as well as a rare public intervention on the back bench from Mr Major, prime minister in 1991 when he predicted, wrongly, the Iraqi president's early removal by his own people. Yesterday Mr Major called President Saddam "a psychopath without conscience" and urged ministers to consider targeting his Republican Guard.

Meanwhile, the Clinton administration kept up the momentum for possible attacks amid signs that domestic support will be harder to rally than previously thought.

President Clinton responded to the pledges of Australian and Canadian support by saying: "We must be prepared to act and I am very grateful that others are prepared to stand with America."

But in Capitol Hill, both Republicans and Democrats attempted to place conditions on Mr Clinton. Some Democrats are anxious not to hand

Mr Clinton a blank cheque to make war on Iraq and are pressing for a congressional resolution to keep the White House on a shorter rein.

The majority Republicans, unwilling to hand Mr Clinton a political victory, are pushing him to extend his possible aims to include the overthrow of President Saddam.

Although the mood on Capitol Hill is firmly in favour of action against Iraq if necessary, secretary of state Madeleine Albright faced critical questioning by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday.

"We are trying to follow the diplomatic string, but it is running out," she told the committee. She stressed that Mr Clinton had not yet decided whether to launch an attack, but repeated that any strike would be substantial.



John Major took Britain into the Gulf war in 1991

Anglo-American "flexibility" to allow Saddam Hussein to back down without losing face, the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, rejected complaints that he was indulging in "militarist rhetoric".

"I have sought throughout this statement to maintain a calm and measured tone, I do not use militarist rhetoric," Mr Cook told fellow leftwing Scot, George Galloway, in the Commons. But he again made plain that until Baghdad allows UN teams to make inspections "without restrictions, without deadlines and without any no-go areas" the threat must remain.

The objective of this exercise is to make sure we find and dismantle these weapons. Any flexibility that stops us from doing that leaves us with an agreement that is not worth having," Mr Cook told MPs in response to Mr Annan's comments.

His Tory shadow, Michael Howard, backed the government but complained about a lack of European Union solidarity. Tory MPs have que-

## News in brief

## Refugees flee Sierra Leone fighting

**AS WEST** African peacekeepers fought their way closer to Freetown and shells hit the Sierra Leone capital, hundreds of civilians fled to the city centre yesterday. At least 13 civilians had reportedly been killed in shelling. Eight hundred refugees who arrived in the Guinean capital Conakry by sea on Sunday said another 7,000 were on the way, a spokesman for the United Nations refugee agency said yesterday.

The Nigerian-led peacekeepers are fighting to oust the junta and restore the elected government. — AP, Freetown and Geneva.

## Pension for Schindler widow

**THE** widow of Oskar Schindler, the playboy German industrialist who rescued more than 1,000 Jews from the Nazi Holocaust, has been granted a monthly pension of \$625 by the Argentine government to save her from poverty.

Emilie Schindler, aged 90, lived in Argentina in anonymity for 50 years before her husband's story was told in the film *Schindler's List*. — Reuters, Buenos Aires.

## Seinfeld ads to net \$40m

**THE** final episode of the award-winning Seinfeld television sitcom is set to earn the NBC network up to \$40 million (\$2 million) in advertising, shattering all records for television revenue from a single programme.

Advertising industry sources have reported that NBC is asking up to \$2 million for a 30-second slot during the hour-long final episode, which will be broadcast on May 14 in the United States. — Martin Kettle, Washington.

## Guatemalan dies by injection

**PRISON** officials carried out Guatemala's first execution by lethal injection yesterday as photographers and reporters jostled for a better view and the condemned man's young children sobbed in a room next door.

Manuel Martinez, aged 42, was condemned to die for killing four children, their parents and their aunt in 1995 in a dispute over a small plot of land.

Guatemala adopted lethal injection last year after a firing squad botched a double execution in September 1996, when prison officials had to give two men shots to the head to finish them off. — Reuters, Fraijanes.

## China expels dissident

**CHINA** has abruptly expelled a US-based Chinese activist who sneaked into the country to try to set up an opposition party, heading off a potential human rights outcry from overseas.

Wang Bingzhang, aged 50, was released from detention and put on a flight to Los Angeles from Shanghai on Monday. He had been seized in central Anhui province on Friday. At the same time, China released three Chinese dissidents held in connection with Mr Wang's secret visit. — Reuters, Beijing.

## Rain hampers drought aid

**AFTER** the worst drought for 100 years, rain and mist are hampering the international food relief effort to Papua New Guinea, forcing helicopters carrying emergency food aid to remote mountain villages to turn back yesterday.

"It's ironic, the rain is good for the drought but it's not so good for us," said Ken Webb, the officer in charge of delivering tonnes of vital aid to remote highland villages. — AP, Port Moresby.

## Italian kidnap victim home



Italian industrialist Giuseppe Sofiantini, abducted by kidnapers eight months ago, was joyful on his arrival home in Brescia yesterday. He was freed after his family paid a ransom of nearly £2 million. PHOTOGRAPH: TITO ALABSO

## Monks brought to their knees

**EVEN** Buddhist monks can fall foul of the marketplace in Hong Kong. Cheap labour, in the form of monks from China, is taking their livelihood away.

From reciting Sutras to praying at funerals, local monks are being squeezed out by an influx of brethren who charge less, the South China Morning Post said. It said some monks' earnings had dropped from HK\$20,000 (£1,570) a month to a just a few thousand.

An employee of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association said that the monks' grumbling was inappropriate. "Monks shouldn't complain about money," said Lee Yee-wai. — Reuters, Hong Kong.

## Troops cross border

## Turkey

**T**URKISH troops supported by armoured vehicles and aircraft fought with Kurdish guerrillas in the mountains of northern Iraq yesterday. A military official in the eastern Turkish town of Tunceli said the operation in the Metina and White Mountains was mounted against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

The report appeared to contradict statements by Turkey's leaders that its troops

were not active in northern Iraq, outside Baghdad's control since the Gulf war.

Residents in the Turkish border districts of Cukucur and Uludere said they heard explosions just inside Iraq.

US-made Cobra attack helicopters were also involved in the operation, the official in Tunceli said. Other sources said around 20 guerrillas were killed in the clashes.

Witnesses and security sources said about 7,000 troops crossed the Iraqi border on Monday.

Iran warned Ankara yesterday that the incursion would

fuel tensions in the area and called for a withdrawal.

Yesterday a Turkish parliamentary commission asked prosecutors to investigate a group of soldiers accused of using Kurdish villagers as human mine detectors.

It is alleged that last year the soldiers forced 40 villagers in the south-eastern province of Batman to walk on suspected minefields, deputy Musa Okcu said. No mine exploded during the walk.

Colonel Kemal Atas, head of the human rights division, denied the minefield allegation. — Agencies.



beautiful freak  
the album  
voted best  
international newcomer  
at the brit awards 1998

27/11/1998



## Mexico City sinks into its own well

The thirsty capital has fallen 30ft leaving many buildings in ruins, writes Sam Dillon

IN A plaza next to one of Mexico City's most important shrines, the colossal, 16th-century Aztec pyramid of Tenochtitlan, a humble water pipe has become a monument to what is, literally, Mexico City's collapse.

Flush with the ground in 1934 when the monument to the Revolution was built, the water pipe now soars 26ft in the air. Why? Anchored in a hard layer of subsoil beneath the city's shallow aquifer, the pipe has stayed put for the past six decades while the city has fallen away.

Mexico City is sinking. To satisfy the capital's 18 million residents, so much water has been pumped out from the aquifer, the layer of soil that holds water, that the ground is collapsing underfoot.

Many cities experience subsidence. The most famous, Venice, has sunk about 9 inches during the 20th century. But from here Venice's problems seem marginal. Mexico City has sunk 30ft.

"The sinking of the soil in Mexico City is one of the biggest engineering problems any city has faced, anywhere," said Ismael Herrera Revilla, a mathematics professor at the National Autonomous University who led a five-year study of the crisis.

In 1519, when the Spaniards conquered the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, there was plenty of water. Mexico City originally straddled two lakes. But when the conquistadors built their own city adjacent to the Aztec capital, they brought engineers to drain the lakes.

Early this century the fast-growing city exhausted its natural springs. Well-digging began, and as the city pumped

folded to support the ceiling and walls of the National Cathedral, the largest and oldest in Latin America, and are trying to shore up its foundations. Across the central Zócalo, the National Palace has begun to list dangerously, and architects are working to keep one wing attached to the building.

Striking evidence of the sinking is visible on the metro where it runs above ground alongside Tlalpan Avenue, south of the city centre. Horizontal when constructed in the mid-1960s, the tracks now look like a roller coaster.

After the subsidence shattered hundreds of colonial churches and mansions, the city stopped pumping water in the centre, instead drawing from wells at the periphery. This has slowed the sinking of the centre to about an inch annually, but some suburbs with many wells sink 18 to 24 inches each year.

The most serious damage now takes place underground, where the collapsing subsoil ruptures sewers, metro tunnels, and water pipes.

"Soil sinkage is a huge problem, but unfortunately we can't drastically reduce the pumping of the aquifer now," said the city's new public works director, Cesar Buenrostro. "Our basic problem is the concentration of political power, industry and most of our cultural treasures and educational institutions in the capital. We want to change that, but for now we have to provide water to our people."

— New York Times

more and more water, the soil began to give way. Initially, annual sinkage in the city centre averaged about two inches, but at its peak around 1950 the soil was collapsing at the astonishing rate of 19 inches a year.

Because the subsidence is not uniform, it has cost hundreds of millions in damage to buildings and other infrastructure over the years, especially in the colonial-era city centre.

Engineers have put up scaffolding to support the ceiling and walls of the National Cathedral, the largest and oldest in Latin America, and are trying to shore up its foundations.

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— New York Times

**'It is one of the biggest engineering problems any city has faced'**

## Words fail schools minister

Jon Henley in Paris

THE French minister for schools has been sent to the bottom of the class for failing to ensure her pupils agreed.

"Two serious errors in seven lines: that is truly a sad example of scholastic failure," thundered Maurice Druon, the secretary-for-life of the Académie Française. "Does Mme Ségolène Royal know how to write?"

This was not Ms Royal's first brush with the Académie, which has been zealously defending the pu-

richy of the French language since 1635.

When she and seven other women in the cabinet recently suggested they be called Madame la Ministre, rather than the grammatically correct but rather gender-confused Madame la Ministre, it fired off a stinging letter of protest to President Jacques Chirac.

Ms Royal's grammatical shortcomings — in a short formal letter, she dropped an e from a past participle, failed to add an s to an adjective, and omitted two commas — were clearly the last straw.

The conservative daily Le

Figaro printed a corrected copy of the letter alongside a vitriolic article by the guardian-in-chief of French as she should be wrote.

"Mme Ségolène Royal is minister for schools," wrote Mr Druon. "[She] cannot be ignorant of the fact that the French language has rules, and that, since the constitution stipulates that the language of the republic is French, one cannot arbitrarily alter said rules, which it is the task of the Académie Française alone to define."

Ms Royal's spokesman said Madame la Ministre would "not give up easily".

## Lewinsky's lawyer tries to stop Starr forcing her into court

Martin Kettle in Washington

MONICA Lewinsky's lawyer William Ginsburg was expected to go to court yesterday to stop Kenneth Starr, the special prosecutor, from forcing his client to testify before a Washington grand jury tomorrow.

Ms Lewinsky has been subpoenaed to give evidence about her relations with President Bill Clinton and allegations that they had an affair. She is expected to go to court tomorrow to stop Starr from forcing her client to testify before a Washington grand jury tomorrow.

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President Clinton working in the Oval Office shortly before his morning statement yesterday on his budget proposal and Iraq while Monica Lewinsky's lawyer sought to have an immunity offer reinstated

PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL RICHARDS

## Crackdown fails to curb Morocco's drugs trade

In Tangier many depend on the hashish crop for a living, writes David Sharrock

ASK any teenage northern Moroccan male what his future will be and he will tell you he has three options: to escape across the sea to Europe; become a contraband dealer; or get into the hashish trade and end up either rich or in prison. Mohamed, who has tried all three, is the perfect guide to Morocco's green gold.

We drive north out of Tangier along the coast before turning inland into the foothills of the Rif mountains. At Oued Allian 50 fishermen are crowded around a small catch. "This is one of the most important places for sending the hashish across Spain," says Mohamed, gesturing towards the windswept paradise town of Tarifa across the straits.

"It's like a river — very easy to cross. Of course, if you don't pay the baksheesh or if the government's wanting to clean up. Most of the big dealers are in prison now but there's a new generation making themselves rich."

Under pressure from the European Union, the Moroccan authorities have cracked down on the hashish market, but with mixed results. The offensive began six years ago, when 10,000 troops were stationed on the northern coast.

Tangier became the focus of police work and a number of drug barons were jailed. But cynics note that not all the Mister Bigs were rounded up; some suggest that politicians' names were linked to the investigations.

The authorities admit that about 173,000 acres of land in the Rif region are under cannabis cultivation; unofficial statistics put the figure even higher.

"Five years ago you had to drive right into the Rif to see the plantations," says Mohamed. "Now it's coming closer to Tangier all the time. It was within 40km [25 miles] last year."

Attempts to produce alternative cash crops have produced few results. Cannabis fetches 10 times the price of wheat. "Without kif we would starve," says Mohamed.

Production is therefore quietly tolerated while the authorities go after the dealers. Three-quarters of the cannabis grown in the Rif is destined for Europe. The Moroccans claim

**'Most of the big dealers are in prison but there's a new generation getting rich'**

to have broken about 30 drugs networks in 1996-97, arresting 34 Britons, 126 Spaniards, 58 French, and 25 Dutch. Those captured were mostly couriers rather than the drug chiefs.

In a sinister development last year, six tonnes of cocaine washed up on Morocco's shores. A Spanish-registered vessel sailing out of Southampton had dumped its cargo after engine failure forced the Colombian crew to shelter in Moroccan waters.

The Moroccans used the incident to support their contention that the drugs trade is international and that Europe should not blame Morocco for all its drug problems.

"We are left to police Europe's southern shores alone," a government official said. "European aid to combat drugs in north Morocco is feeble, if not non-existent."



Tribal Shanti Bahini rebels lay down their arms at a football stadium in Khagrachhari, Bangladesh, after their leader Shantu Larma and 739 rebels surrendered to end a 25-year war for autonomy in the south-eastern Chittagong Hill Tracts in which 8,500 people died. Mr Larma was the first to hand his Chinese rifle to Sheikh Hasina, the prime minister. Front of the 25,000-strong crowd. Up to 1,200 more rebels are due to surrender this month under a treaty giving tribal leaders sweeping powers

PHOTOGRAPH: PAVEL RYANOV

## A personality cult without the personality

James Meek in Ashkhabad profiles the Turkmen president, a bland man with an eye for glitz and a nose for French perfume

SAPARMURAT Niyazov stood in front of the portrait, inflated with reverence. For a man hooked on adoration, it was a fix he could not refuse — a painting of himself as a child, with his mother. His mother was depicted as the Virgin Mary. He was depicted as Christ, and the artist had painted a halo behind his head.

President Niyazov, ruler of Turkmenistan and the focus of one of the world's most intense, if recent, personality cults, was not embarrassed. He is the least embarrassed man in central Asia.

In 1992 this portly one-time Soviet functionary ac-

cepted a vote of 99.5 per cent — he was the only candidate — as no more than his due. Two years later he welcomed a 99.9 per cent vote in a referendum extending his rule to 2002.

He took the proffered title *Turkmenbashi* — leader of the Turkmen — without a blush.

He stamps out what little organised opposition catches light and holds a number of political prisoners, at least two abducted abroad. One United States human rights foundation lists Turkmenistan as one of the world's 16 most repressive countries.

But because he is sitting on the world's fourth larg-

est reserves of natural gas, opposes Islamic fundamentalism and is friendly to the West, visitors such as John Major, François Mitterrand and Prince Charles have not peeked too impolitely into the despot's dungeons.

His portraits and busts peer out from lintels and cornices on every street of the bleak oasis towns around the Karakum desert. His golden profile hovers eternally in the corner of the television screen.

What would it take to embarrass the president? Name a French perfume after him? They've already done that.

Build something supremely *ouré*. Like a 200ft

ceremonial arch surmounted by a 26ft revolving golden statue of him holding an illuminated globe?

Too late, they're building it. "It looks like a darts trophy," said one Western resident of Ashkhabad. "I've heard it's costing \$7 million."

Turkmenistan was the poorest part of the Soviet Union and its gas wealth remains stoppered by export problems. Yet Mr Niyazov has spent hundreds of millions on showy building projects.

A French company built him a \$80 million marble palace in Ashkhabad. There's another new palace on the edge of town. He doesn't live in either. His home is a third palace in Fyryza, in the mountains south of the capital.

While the fountains gush and sparkle in front of the presidential palace, ordinary Turkmen have no regular water supply.

Power cuts and even gas shortages are common.

Western diplomats try to defend Mr Niyazov as a would-be Kemal Atatürk determined to drag his country into the modern world by authoritarian methods and the force of his personality before getting around to democracy.

"He obviously has a tremendous ego, but he genuinely thinks he's developing his country," said one. Another commented: "Democracy is further down his agenda than the economy. I think there's a good chance that if they get the economy right, democracy will fall into place."

Nurberdi Nurmamedov,

one of the few dissidents who have not left the country, been put in prison, or been intimidated into silence, said this was nonsense.

"There are people who say Niyazov is right for Turkmenistan, that he's the strong hand, the authoritarian figure people need. It's not true. It only suits their financial interests to say that. Such people are lying to themselves and lying to everyone else."

Despite the strange resonance of a slogan plastered all over Ashkhabad which can reasonably be translated as *Ein Reich, Ein Volk, Ein Turkmen Führer*, the bland and peaceable Mr Niyazov is no Hitler.

"The facelessness of our system," said Mr Nurmamedov, "is expressed in the face of this one man."

## Soccer sends boys to jail

Alex Duval Smith in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

HUNDREDS of children have been cleared from the streets of Burkina Faso's capital, Ouagadougou, and jailed as part of a clean-up during the African Cup of Nations football championship which started on Saturday.

Many of them, mostly boys aged three to 18, came from impoverished rural areas to make money from fans here for the 16-team play-off.

"The boys have travelled in from the rural areas to make money as pickpockets and prostitutes," said Souffiano Ouedraogo, aged 26, a supervisor at a children's hostel in Tangai near Ouagadougou.

The hostel, Solidarité Jeunesse (Youth Solidarity), aims to pick up the street children before they have been jailed, there is little we can do," said Mr Ouedraogo.

Thirteen-year-old Tindano from Kaya, 60 miles north of Ouagadougou, would rather have been sleeping rough than included among the 30 boys at Tangai hostel. "They took me from the street where I could have made good money," he said.

But Mr Ouedraogo expected Tindano to stay for the duration of the event. "They get fed here, we are organising football matches for them and we have two tickets for each of the boys to go to matches in Ouagadougou."

"The conditions in jail, where eight-year-old children are locked up with adults, are appalling. Those who go in as beggars come out as glue-sniffers, thieves and child prostitutes."

But Solidarité-Jeunesse can provide only temporary shelter from clean-ups preceding events such as the African Cup of Nations, the Pespaco film festival every other autumn, and the Organisation of African Unity conference to be held in June.

"The other supervisor, Sébastien Ouedraogo, aged 28, said: 'We expect two thirds of them to leave when the football ends. They would rather make money as child prostitutes or as petty thieves.'

"If any want to go back to their parents, we will take them. But these children are often not welcome in their families, either because of poverty or because they have been thrown out by the new wife of a polygamous man."



President Clinton working in the Oval Office shortly before his morning statement yesterday on his budget proposal and Iraq while Monica Lewinsky's lawyer sought to have an immunity offer reinstated

PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL RICHARDS



## Councils for the people

For a start, give them back the business rate

MARGARET THATCHER was not the only person in Britain who disliked local government. True, she was extreme in the controls she imposed on local councils. Not even Stalin achieved such centralised powers. But a popular institution would attract popular support. British election statistics suggest local councils are a turn-off. On the continent, turnout reaches 80 per cent. More people vote in local elections in Italy than in national elections. Britain's turnout, among the lowest in Europe, barely reaches 40 per cent. By-elections are becoming even worse. On a recent Thursday none achieved 20 per cent and one, in Liverpool, slumped to the lowest ever turnout for a local by-election — a miserable six per cent. The march of the quangocracy had to be stopped, but Labour was right in this week's consultation paper to insist on modernising local government.

It is easy enough to catalogue the sins of the quangocracy: 3,000 unelected bodies, over 40,000 government-appointed or self-appointed members, over £30 billion of former local council controlled services in unelected hands. But when 60 per cent of the electorate declines to turn out to vote for local councillors, how genuinely accountable are they? Lack of accountability is only the first concern. Burgeoning bureaucratic procedures are another turn-off — one local council recently appointed its 101st committee, a night café sub-committee — along with worrying complaints of the spread of corruption in both Labour and Tory fiefdoms: Labour's Doncaster and Glasgow and Conservative-controlled Westminster. Labour is right to seek ways of repopularising local government. Remember the social reforms which are now taken for granted — hospitals, poor relief, subsidised rented homes, clean water — were all launched locally by either local councils, churches or voluntary organi-

sations, often in the teeth of central government opposition.

Labour's first new popular move, a London mayor, is due to take up office, subject to a referendum, in the year 2000. This will reinvestigate local government: the first directly elected executive in the UK with an electorate of seven million compared to the 90,000 represented by MPs. Other cities will want to seize their chance to raise their profile. There are many reasons for objecting to this move — stalemated councils, a foreign American import, the potential for Big Boss patronage — but Labour is right to let those cities which want an elected mayor to go ahead. Local government is in urgent need of new experiments including the separation of executive from representational roles. Mayoral elections would provide some fizz and reduce the media's obsession with Westminster. Even people who follow politics are frequently unable to name the leaders of Britain's major cities. Try it: name the council leaders of Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds.

Labour has a bundle of other ideas including annual elections, local referendums, citizens' juries, weekend or computerised voting, and a rolling registration list with prize draw in a bid to find the lost four million. It wants councils to be more representative of the communities they run: more women (only 25 per cent at present) and fewer retired (35 per cent). It knows local councils want two other reforms: a fairer grant system and the return of non domestic rates. Local democracy cannot be regenerated while Whitehall controls 80 per cent of all spending. Returning the business rate, which Margaret Thatcher nationalised, would raise locally generated revenue to almost 50 per cent. Labour must concede this reform but is right to insist on it being conditional on accepting change.

## The wisdom of heeding Mr Annan

Even at this stage a deal with Saddam should not be ruled out

KOFI ANNAN, the UN Secretary-General, has kept his counsel on the Iraq crisis, except for a few guarded comments, until now. His opinions, as delivered yesterday to the BBC, carry all the more weight because of his previous caution. They deserve to be considered at length.

Mr Annan believes that Iraq has painted itself into a corner, but that the international community "should not insist on humiliating them." He urges all sides to the dispute to drop "fundamentalist... or purist positions." Asked if that means that both Baghdad and Washington should "cool it", he replies that "you can put it that way." Mr Annan also urges all sides to show "flexibility". He appeals to everyone concerned to show courage and wisdom, and to take decisions which could be tough but may be the only way to reach a solution and avoid military conflict. Such conflict would involve "devastating air strikes in an area which has gone through many traumas." Asked if he will back military action if all else fails, he warns that the consequences of such action should be thought through very carefully.

What is Mr Annan getting at? Whitehall stifles its annoyance and insists that he surely cannot mean anything less than full compliance with the UN resolutions. That is certainly the goal: the question is about methods and the balance of risks. Mr Annan is a diplomat but what he is saying is clear enough to anyone willing to listen. He

is not happy with the drift into military action which, apart from the pain it inflicts, may make matters worse. And he believes that there is room for "flexibility" on both sides. The UN Secretary-General does not have a monopoly of wisdom. But he is in touch with all parties both directly and indirectly concerned, and may be better placed to assess their respective merits. He is also a diplomat who seeks, and should seek, a peaceful outcome wherever possible. That may be a disadvantage if it leads to weakness. But in a situation where the momentum for military conflict — whatever its perils — seems almost irresistible, a calm application of brakes is no bad thing.

The popular view here, as our opinion poll showed yesterday, is one of majority support for military action. But Britain's position in support of the US is a special one, and the problem will be viewed very differently in most of the world where such action is not endorsed. The various compromise plans put forward — the latest by the Arab League working with France, Russia and Iraq — may be worthless. Or they may deserve more careful analysis than they are likely to receive from Washington or London. On these and other matters, it would be wise to listen to Mr Annan. He has said correctly he will not go to Baghdad unless there is some prospect of an agreed deal. It would be sensible not to rule out in advance the possibility of making such a deal — even with Saddam.

## When common sense isn't on tap

Why does mineral water soar as ordinary water gets better?

DRINKING water is of a very high quality throughout England and Wales and is steadily improving. Of three million tests carried out in 1996 some 99.7 per cent showed that the standards had been met compared with 99.5 per cent the previous year. These are not our words. They come from reports of the Government's Drinking Water Inspectorate which confirms that water supplies are of a very high standard and have been improving as a result of the hundreds of millions that the privatised water companies have had to shell out to meet exacting EU and UK standards.

Why then is mineral water the fastest growing sector of the soft drinks industry and one of the fastest growing industries anywhere? A report published this week by Premier Waters shows that sales of bottled mineral water have risen 56 per cent since 1990 (which coincides with the post-privati-

sation period of intense investment). It seems the more our water improves the more we turn to more expensive substitutes. Economic theory is being turned on its head. The public buys mineral water in ever increasing quantities even though a litre of tap water costs only 0.07p delivered into our homes, while a litre of bottled water costs 50p, or five or six times that in a restaurant — unless you can summon up the courage to ask the waiter for the refreshment that dare not speak its name: tap water.

More than half of the mineral water sold is of the still variety which expert tasters can't tell apart from ordinary water and which certainly isn't safer or purer. We do, of course defend to the death people's right to buy more expensive, inferior products if they so wish. But we also defend the right to use one's commonsense which, curiously, isn't always on tap when it is needed.



## Letters to the Editor

### A bombardment of warring views

THE conclusion you draw from the Guardian/ICM poll on support for military action in the Gulf — that young people today are bereft of a peace movement and are more belligerent than their predecessors — is absurd (Majority say bomb Iraq, February 10).

I am amongst those who favour military action in the Gulf, but am by no means one of Thatcher's "hard-edged" children. I have been vigorously opposed to many of the West's recent military interventions: Grenada, Beirut and Somalia to name but a few paternalistic, meddling outings in which the US has recently engaged.

The difference in this instance is clear: Saddam Hussein, whilst he remains at the helm of Iraq, represents a clear threat to the security of the world. His stores of weapons of mass destruction are not merely tools to preserve the security of his country or administration, but the arsenal of an aggressor.

In light of this, you cannot draw parallels with the peace protestors of the 60s and 70s, for were the US now to plan a foray into a tiny, harmless southern Asian state, you would find many of the poll's respondents confounding your conclusions. Christopher Fryer, 20 St Johns Villas, London N11 3BU.

AS A 22-year-old member of the Campaign Against the Arms Trade and Scientists for Global Responsibility I am clearly in a minority over British involvement in military action against Iraq. I suggest that "conventional wisdom" cannot be used when defining a pacifist demography; rather, we should

consider the sources of information people use to develop their personal ethics.

If your news sources are only CNN, the BBC and British papers (say) then you will mostly receive pro-intervention opinions, simply because it is not seen as newsworthy to describe the suffering of Iraqi children, for example, in each article on the Iraq crisis.

Today's technology allows every student in Britain access to news direct from sources in the Gulf, as well as opinions on the US and UK from other perspectives. It is instructive to read French editorials and Kuwaiti reports as well as the words of Messrs Clinton and Blair, because there is no clean, single solution. Nick Drake, Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Southampton.

THE younger age group in your poll who favour action may have less personal awareness of the horrors of war. They and many of the 58 per cent might have opposed war if they understood the medical realities behind the threat.

Nerve gases such as VX and biological agents such as anthrax could be widely dispersed as a result of bombing attacks; only exact targeting can produce the high temperatures and pressures to destroy the weapons reliably, and the knowledge to achieve such accuracy seems unavailable. If Iraq has chemical and biological weapons in usable missiles, they could be used in early response to an attack.

Anthrax can be a devastating illness, needing high doses of antibiotics within hours, almost certainly unavailable in post-sanctions Iraq: an area contaminated

with anthrax spores is uninhabitable for years. As little as one milligram (a drop) of VX, which can be absorbed through the skin, is fatal within minutes in the absence of intensive care and specific antidotes.

The elimination of all weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East must be the prime objective. We fear that military action against Iraq could have the opposite effect, and diplomacy remains the right course. Gillian Reeve, Dr Douglas Holdstock, MEDACT, 601 Holloway Road, London N19 4DJ.

THE relative ease with which chemical and biological warfare (CBW) production facilities can be built, concealed, dismantled and re-established means that any compromise on unrestricted access to UN weapons inspectors would render the inspection process fatally flawed (Leader, February 9).

Therefore, those who favour such a compromise are effectively allowing Saddam to preserve his residual CBW capacity and offering him the chance to continue its development.

Opponents of decisive action now appear to believe that doing a deal with Saddam will prevent conflict in the region and that his desire to acquire weapons of mass destruction has been quenched.

A more likely analysis is that his military ambitions remain and that a far greater conflagration is merely being postponed. Dr Stephen Pullinger, Executive director, International Security Information Service (ISIS), 20 Embankment Place, London WC2N 6NN.

FIND it fascinating that a people which is supposed to have become more in touch with its caring side, as evidenced by the outpouring of emotion after Diana's death, is a people also more inclined to bomb the living daylight out of thousands of Iraqi civilians. Maurice Hickey, 31 Eastfield Crescent, Plymouth PL3 5JX.

DID I read it wrong or was there a printing error: 56 per cent of the population support bombing Iraq, while 62 per cent agree it could lead to a wider conflict? I wonder if the former would agree to fight in the latter? John Murphy, 23 Crossfield Road, London N17 6AY.

WOULD the British and American governments allow Iraqis to inspect our weapons of mass destruction? John Rawlings, Dept of International Studies, University of Leeds.

I WAS amazed to hear the US has sent 3,000 ground troops to the Gulf. I think it's a cruel way for a country to treat its soldiers but I suppose it would cost £150 for each minute of delay. It was one of those defining moments. Progress, I suppose. Ian Laval, Meadowbank Farm, Curthwaite, Cumbria CA7 8BG.

MY critical comment on Jonathan Freedland's local government "corruption" article (Letters, February 4) was cut in a way that implied I was criticising my own Nottingham City Council. Far from it. The overwhelming majority of local councils are run by ordinary, decent, hard-working men and women. "Public service" may mean little to cynical London-based journalists but it is still of value in the East Midlands, where I have been a city councillor for the last 15 years. Cllr Brent Charlesworth, Council House, Nottingham.

We may edit letters. Please supply a full address.

## More fan mail

IT IS a bit rich of Manchester United supporter, Roger Healey of London NW6 (Letters, February 10), to accuse the Guardian of abandoning its Manchester roots. As for City fans being an endangered species, a recent survey of football shirt sales in Manchester placed United behind City (home), City (away), Brazil, Italy and Liverpool, proving that United's fans make them the best supported team in the country — outside Manchester. Stephen Ashley, 5 Irwin Close, Ickham, Middlesex, UB10 8HA.

## A Country Diary

HERTFORDSHIRE: The gossip round here is understandably preoccupied with the way Herts has suddenly been put into the front line of rural development. It's always been a bit of a suburban county, and the New Towns at Welwyn, Letchworth and Stevenage were once seen as models for enlightened new countryside settlements. But the prospect of 10,000 new houses on unsold Green Belt land at Stevenage — in effect another New Town — is something else. Almost nowhere in the county is free from similar proposals as contributions to meeting the Government's goal of 4 million new homes in the next 20 years, and there's a scheme for a large estate on a one-time small holding, complete with its own kingfisher stream, at the bottom of our road. It is hard to see what the Green Belt is for if not to stop this creeping advance of concrete between existing towns, and giving greater priority to building on urban "brownfield" sites has to be right. But what if new homeowners don't want

## On Powell and other failures

THANK you for your leader on Enoch Powell (A flawed and failed politician, February 10). The Prime Minister's effusive description of him as one of the great figures of 20th century British politics, and his repugnant view in denying black people a place in the life of this country as only "controversial" merely confirms that the views and feelings of black people count for very little with today's decision-makers. No doubt the Prime Minister himself aspires to greatness, but surely there is more to greatness than the exploitation of people's desire to be counted superior to others at whatever cost to other people's misery? Rt Rev Wilfred Wood, Bishop of Croydon, 100 George Street, Croydon CR0 1PE.

I WAS putting my son on the 4pm Virgin train to Euston at Carlisle on Monday. Some people nearby were talking in sign-language. The doors closed and a man in the group got there a second or two late, trying in his frantic silence to open the door. The train was stationary but the attendant by the door declined to let him board. I remonstrated and was told it cost £150 for each minute of delay. It was one of those defining moments. Progress, I suppose. Ian Laval, Meadowbank Farm, Curthwaite, Cumbria CA7 8BG.

MY critical comment on Jonathan Freedland's local government "corruption" article (Letters, February 4) was cut in a way that implied I was criticising my own Nottingham City Council. Far from it. The overwhelming majority of local councils are run by ordinary, decent, hard-working men and women. "Public service" may mean little to cynical London-based journalists but it is still of value in the East Midlands, where I have been a city councillor for the last 15 years. Cllr Brent Charlesworth, Council House, Nottingham.

ROY Hattersley has recently advised disenchanted Labour Party members to stick with the party. On July 26 you published an article from the same hand under the heading "Why I am no longer loyal to Labour". Can he tell us why he has so quickly changed his mind? John Bowler, Beechwood, Painswick, Glos GL6 6TU.

## Cut-price Bill

DEMOCRATIC societies should guard the diversity of the press. Without a range of opinions before us we are less well informed and less free. But such an honourable intention should not be an excuse for bad legislation. The amendment to the Competition Bill tabled by Lord McNally and Viscount Astor which your Leader and Polly Toynbee so vociferously supported (February 9) at best adds nothing to the Bill and is likely to confuse matters.

The Bill brings domestic law into line with European law by prohibiting the abuse of a dominant position in a market. The amendment specifically defines what dominant means but, although it uses more words, it does not appear to add anything to the general definition provided. Similarly, whilst the amendment specifies what "abuse" should mean in terms of newspapers, it either adds nothing to the existing definitions or else relies upon some dubious assumptions.

There is perhaps a reluctance to accept that the broad terms of the Bill can be effective in combating anti-competitive behaviour in the newspaper market. We should perhaps recognise that on some occasions less is more, at least just as much. Daniel Beard, Monkton Chambers, Gray's Inn, London WC1.

IF Tony Blair considers his loyalty to Rupert Murdoch to be greater than to the public who elected New Labour to office, he forfeits his party's democratic legitimacy and affirms the public's growing conviction that participation in elections is a waste of time. Jim Scott, 14 Richbourne Terrace, London SW6 1AU.



## Proud to be a Stepford Wife

I WOULD normally ignore Brian Sedgmore's remarks likening some Labour women MPs to the Stepford Wives (Labour flays "trivial" BBC, February 7, and Letters, February 9). During the last 20 years I have heard just about every variation of the "women can't handle politics" theme. This latest contribution adds nothing. We have been described as babes, androids, sheep on Prozac and a few other things besides. This name-calling suggests that women MPs, apart from carrying out the

usual responsibilities of the job, legislating, debating, representing, lobbying etc, are also expected to achieve things that 300 odd Labour men MPs are not expected to do. I wonder what it is?

Of course I may be wrong about Brian Sedgmore's remarks. The Stepford Wives story is about two courageous women who challenge male domination and manipulation; perhaps he was paying us a subtle compliment. Jenny Jones MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

## The agonising and the Ecstasy

IT WAS enlightening to read that Janet Betts feels that end-users of Ecstasy should not face prosecution (Tripped up by the wall, January 31). If she can say this, with all the suffering she has experienced then how can we as a society continue to prosecute those caught in possession of small amounts of Ecstasy?

For those who have never been to a rave club, the plot goes like this. The clubber goes to the club, takes Ecstasy, the "horrendous" effects of which make them: a) incredibly friendly to everyone they meet; b) fall in love with the whole world; and c) dance a lot and thoroughly enjoy themselves.

The clubber then goes home. Where is the crime? The police know that the trouble they face from rave clubs is negligible compared to the perils of drunks at closing time. Ecstasy is not addictive — you will never find an Ecstasy user mugging an old lady because he's desperate for his next fix.

As an Ecstasy-user who has a good career and pays taxes it irritates me that I am considered a criminal. And it frightens me that by buying a few pills I face losing my job, a huge fine or even prison. What would society gain from that? R Dennis, London NS.

What a youngs

Jonathan Freedland

Rupe takes hit for once

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## Diary

Matthew Norman

**M**YSTERY surrounds attempts to deter Punch magazine from running its recent profile of Mandy Mandelson. In its issue, out today, Punch reports that Mandy rang editor James Steen threatening to speak to the owner Mohamed Al-Fayed. When this tactic failed, Mr Steen was called by Guy Black, director of the Press Complaints Commission, who warned him that some of Mandy's Nottingham Hill neighbours were complaining of "harassment". This Mandy confirmed in yet another call, telling Mr Steen he had received two letters from neighbours himself in a claim later modified to one letter and a phonecall. Bar-fingling, however, when Punch wrote to every resident of the street, not one mentioned harassment. When a suspicious Mr Steen asked him if he knew Guy Black, this Mandy categorically denied. Mr Black did not, however, speak to Mandy "a handful of times, about this, that and the other", then confessing to having met him "ages ago" at a party conference, and finally telling the Times: "I know Mr Mandelson and talk to him, but we have not spoken about this." Something curious is going on here, it seems, and someone may be enjoying a liberal relationship with the liberal truth. But who?

**T**HE emergence of an exciting new political title — a very new Labour title indeed — is noted from the attendance list at a recent IPPR conference at Millbank. Sandwiched between Mary Wimbury, public affairs manager at the BBC, and Dominic Young, international's copywriter manager — is one Anna Yallop. Miss Yallop is listed, enchantingly, as "director, parliamentary office of Derek Wyatt MP".

**W**HEN John Prescott recovers from Monday night's indignity, and recover he will (he gets knocked down, he gets up again, as the song might put it, you're never gonna keep him down), he will turn swiftly to the task of banishing corruption from local government. One council that will be safe from his attentions, however, is North Yorkshire: its fiscal probity extends literally to the last penny, as Angela Lloyd-Williams will confirm. As the Yorkshire Post reports, she just received a cheque for the balance owed to her for work as a supply teacher. The cheque is made out to the sum of £0.01, and arrived on the same day as another first class letter, headed "whistle blowers' charter", inviting staff to raise concerns about council incompetence.

**T**HE restoration of Tory morale accelerated at the Grosvenor House Hotel on Monday night at the Conservative Winter Ball. "All be unperturbed and welcome the leader of the Conservative Party..." the toastmaster rousing announced. "...William Waldegrave". When the tittering had faded, William delivered his usual "Fresh for the Future" speech, on this occasion drumming in the modernity of his approach by reminding a table of cigar-puffing young gentlemen that they really shouldn't be smoking before the loyal toast.

**E**VEN as Mr Hague was addressing his troops in London, Harriet Harman was delighting Cleveland as the New Labour Welfare Reform Roadshow hit its middle-brow. Oddly, given that this was a carefully invited audience, security was tight, and every Labour party member was searched on arrival. Amongst the confiscated was a bottle of ink, while two people were relieved of Campaign Group News, which carries the controversial NEC report on welfare reform.

**O**n Sunday, news of the death of Enoch Powell was broken on LWT by Trevor Phillips, and on BBC1 by Moira Stuart. As for the Guardian, this carried the bylines of Vivek Chaudhary and Vikram Dodd. No doubt Mr Powell himself would have relished the irony as much as the rest of us.



# What a rum crew youngsters are

## Commentary

Jonathan Freedland

**O**NE of Absolutely Fabulous's acutest observations came in the form of Sally, the bespectacled, strait-laced daughter of the pill-popping, vodka-drinking 60s leftover, Edina. Their relationship suggested a strange, new dynamic. Like all kids, the children of the flower children want to rebel against their parents — but how can they shuck and disappoint a generation of dope-smoking ex-hippies? There's only one clue, and Sally found it by becoming ultra-square.

Yesterday came word that Sally's generation is taking its rebellion a stage further. The Guardian/ICM poll discovered that today's 18-24-year-olds are more gung-ho and ready to bomb Iraq than any other age group. While their parents once strummed of peace, love and harmony, today's youth are bursting with bellicosity. Fully two thirds of Britain's under-24s back a military campaign against Saddam, while their grandparents among the over-65s barely scrape a majority

in favour. This is a big change. Since Siegfried Sassoon's day, we have associated the young with the loud demand for peace. While ageing generals sent teenage boys to their deaths, anti-war sentiment seemed part of the essential condition of youth. In the 1960s it was Vietnam; in the early 1980s no student felt dressed without a CND badge, no Easter complete without a march to ban the bomb. In 1990, during the first bout between Saddam and the West, ICM found young people were the least enthusiastic for military action — the very reverse of the latest findings.

What has made this generation so different? "The youth of the past had first-hand knowledge of war and the studies it brings," says Chris Blackday, 18 years old and studying to be a product designer. "We haven't got a clue." The second world war feels like ancient history; even his parents have no memory of it. When Britain fought to reconquer the Falklands, Chris was three years old.

War seems a lot less serious to him and his friends. The only conflict they remember was the last showdown in the Gulf, the made-for-TV war, where bombs registered as blips and zaps on a video screen. If young people now seem cavalier about the prospect of Saddam, The Sequel, it might be because the last round seemed so virtual — a

cyberwar devoid of flesh-and-blood human suffering. Remember, this is the Nintendo generation, raised on videogames and Terminator movies: if a man gets knocked down, he gets up again. My own generation, teenagers during the cold war years of the 1980s, grew up in the shadow not only of Aids but of a nuclear winter. Our evenings were darkened by TV dramas like Thrillers, The Day After and Survivors. We

down seems like science fiction. Biological or chemical warfare, on the other hand, feels all too real. Recent movie horrors — from Outbreak to The Rock to Twelve Monkeys — have dealt not in bombs but killer viruses, just a broken test-tube away from slaughtering all humanity. Perhaps today's environmentally-conscious young people are particularly alarmed by biological mayhem; maybe they regard the mission against Saddam as a green war — waged to prevent him wrecking the earth.

But that's a hard thesis to stand up. "People have lost interest in it quite a bit," says 19-year-old Catherine Fielding of her generation's eco-awareness. "It's sort of faded away." In a variation of the Saffy-Edina syndrome, fellow student Helen Gibson admits her mum recycles glass and paper, but she doesn't bother. For all the Swampy hype, Britain's young people are

not very green at all: when ICM asked Britons if the environment should be a higher government priority — perhaps at the expense of car drivers — it was the 18-24s who objected most.

The truth is, Britain's youngest voters are a group who defy every possible stereotype. They're kick-ass attitude to Iraq is not motivated by greenism, but nor does it come from slacker ignorance and isolationism: as a recent Demos study found, more of today's youth are passing GCSEs and A-levels, going to university and travelling abroad than ever before. The explosion of new media — from satellite TV to the Internet — means they are unusually well-informed on interna-

tional affairs: my random sample yesterday were all up to speed on the Gulf crisis. The confusion comes in any attempt to locate the generation politically — a point underlined by a trawl through all the Guardian/ICM surveys of the last year. On some measures, they are clearly on the right: our October poll found they were the age group most hostile to paying higher taxes in return for better public services. But they were also the group most eager to give a role to the trade unions in running the economy and most opposed to Labour's cut in lone parents' benefits.

On social questions, they are definitely progressive. In the latest survey, they showed the greatest tolerance on the Monica Lewinsky affair — untroubled by Tony Blair's personal support for Bill Clinton. An earlier study found they were happy for the Scots and Welsh to run their own lives; remarkably, clear majorities went so far as to support full independence for both Scotland and Wales.

They are not traditionalists; they are quite unfazed by the break-up of the United Kingdom, and include the highest proportion of Britons eager to abolish the monarchy. They show a libertarian disdain for the nanny state, more opposed to smoking bans, for example, than any other age group. The bottom line is, Britain's young fit none of the old, increasingly irrelevant left-right labels. Instead they are centrist winners: politically future: fiscally conservative, socially liberal and, we now discover, unafraid of war. They have no patience for gesture politics. At Monday's Park awards, several of the young winners politely stepped up — and thanked their mums. It fell to Chumbawumba's Danbert Nobacon to pour an icebucket over the head of John Prescott. Mr Nobacon is 35.

# Don't go blindly down this US welfare road



Shirley Williams

**O**N March 17, we shall learn the fate of the welfare state. We are promised the greatest reform of the tax and benefits system for a generation. There are already indications of the Government's intentions. In a significant speech delivered in Holland, at the Hague on January 20, Tony Blair said: "It is to find a new way, a third way, between unbridled individualism and laissez-faire on the one hand; and old-style government intervention, the corporatism of 1960s social democracy, on the other."

The flagstones of the Third Way have been laid. Each has its American counterpart. They are welfare to work, the reform of the social security system, earned income tax credits, and the creation of a highly flexible and competitive workforce. But there are real concerns about following the American model, whatever the chemistry of the Blair-Clinton relationship. The United States has been marvellously successful in combining high growth rates, low inflation and impressive job creation. Its unemployment rate, based on sound sampling techniques, is now 4.7 per cent. Yet it is also the richest country a quarter of whose families live in poverty, unable to provide health care for 41 million of its citizens, in which the bottom fifth of the population enjoys less than 5 per cent of the national income.

Welfare-to-work in the United States has been based on a withering moral contempt for those dependent on benefit. The 1996 legislation to end welfare did not include the training and child care that had been promised to enable single mothers and long-term unemployed people to work.

Holland, where Tony Blair gave his "Third Way" speech, has an excellent universal health insurance system, recently slimmed but still generous benefits, and no pressure on lone parents with children to work under five to work. A society that recognises obligations as well as rights, it has much to commend it. It puts into practice our own Prime Minister's pledge that no one in real need should suffer. That is a pledge still far from being realised here.

average cost of a child-minder, according to the same study, is £26.50 a week. After taking into account national insurance, travel and other work costs and loss of benefit, it is simply not worth working. Unlike most other European countries, Britain makes almost no provision for subsidising child care, and does not promote family-friendly employment practices. The Government's proposals for child care are welcome but far from being achieved, and there are bound to be serious doubts about quality. The approach to disability allowance has been marked by a similar lack of imagination — and dare one say compassion? It isn't just the absurd and cruel decisions made about some of the individuals involved. It is also the lack of sensitive recruitment and training schemes for disabled people.

There is no recognition that the last government encouraged older men and women with poor employment prospects to retire early or claim invalidity benefits, anything to get them off the unemployment statistics. These hapless people are now condemned as frauds.

**E**ARNED income tax credit (EITC), called here Working Family Tax Credit, was introduced in the US by President Ford because Congress was much more inclined to accept tax credits than welfare benefits. Yet the tax credit system is far from ideal. According to a recent study by the Rowntree Foundation, a single parent earning 25 an hour, a good wage for the unskilled, would have to work 45 hours for 50 weeks a year to receive the same benefit from EITC as now gets from family credit. Such a woman working two thirds time or less would lose heavily.

EITC requires employees to provide detailed private information to employers; fraud is already a big problem in the US. Nor is it clear that tax credits can be administered individually, or, in the case of a couple, paid to the mother rather than the father, though reports this week suggested that the Chancellor has found a solution.

Baroness Williams is a Liberal Democrat spokeswoman in the Lords, and a faculty member of the John F Kennedy school of government at Harvard.

# Rupert takes a hit for once



**Polly Toynbee** hails the Lords for putting the boot into the press baron. Following their rebellion, the campaign to outlaw his cosy deals with Blair is gathering embarrassing speed

**S**O THE noble Lords did their stuff. They defied both Labour and Conservative parties to vote for an amendment to stop Murdoch's predatory newspaper price-war. When parliament considers Lords reform and the value of a second chamber, their gallant independence on Monday night should be remembered.

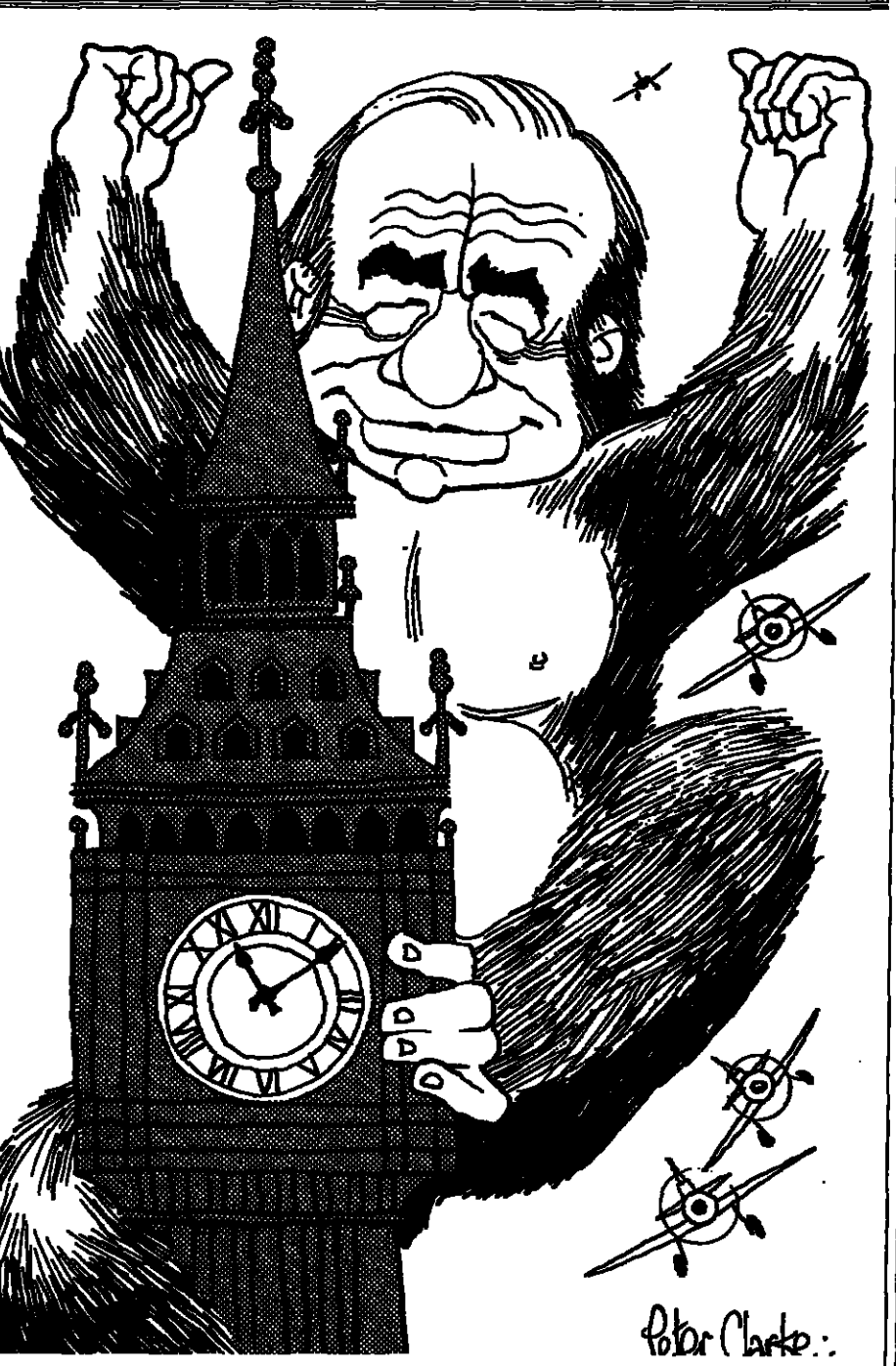
Not only did 23 Labour peers rebel, but many of those 81 who voted with the Government did so with heavy hearts, grumbling loudly as they went. By chance on Monday night, just as the key amendment was being debated, the annual reception for Labour peers was in full swing. Unlucky timing for the Prime Minister himself, as the rebellion took place. Did he sense the queasy, shame-faced mood among his own people as they trooped out to vote? Said one: "I voted very, very reluctantly. If a Labour government's about anything, it's about curbing the power of Murdoch."

Yesterday morning the Government was putting on its usual needlessly shirty and abrasive front. "This will not become law!" sources de-

clared, and went on to sneer that it was all a got-up media thing, navel-gazing by a self-obsessed group of journeoes on less successful papers etc. If that's what they really think, they just don't get it. If they think this is just a chattering classes bit of nonsense, then they'll get another bloody nose when the bill comes back to the Commons. For along their own Commons benches, old

that thought was already in the air. The word was that the Government may tighten up the clause that defines what is meant by a dominant position in the market. In the past Murdoch has escaped two referrals to the Office of Fair Trading by pleading that although he controls some 41 per cent of all national newspaper readership, there are plenty of others in the market so he's

not "dominant". And so his cross-subsidised price cuts continue to drive others out of the market and prevent newcomers entering it. Would strengthening that definition do the trick? No-one knows until any new wording is examined by expert lawyers. Gordon Borge, Labour member of the Lords amendment and former director general of the Office of Fair Trading, is glad they are at least considering it. But he still believes there needs to be a specific mention in the bill of newspapers, and any general wording is unlikely to suffice. He listened to the Government's argument carefully in the Lords, puzzled by its weakness. If it is indeed the Government's intention to tackle Murdoch's pricing, why didn't they say so? And why should they mind if the amendment passed? "There's nothing wrong with a bill having both belt and braces. It's hardly worth their while fighting so hard against an amendment merely because it's repetitious." As for the argument that it would be somehow wrong to single out any one industry, rather than frame a bill for every industry, Borge points out that newspapers are already treated as a special commodity under the existing monopolies legislation. (Which Murdoch deftly avoided when he acquired the Times by claiming it was exempt as a loss-maker. Now he claims the Times is exempt from preda-



tory pricing rules because it is nearly making money — in any case a dubious claim unless he opens his secretive books. If the bill arrives in the Commons in a state that Borge doesn't think deals adequately with Murdoch, the DTI minister with the rotten job of pushing it through will be Nigel Griffiths. He, poor chap, is one of the opposition MPs who referred Murdoch's predatory pricing to the OFT in 1994, with no success, so he will have to eat a few words. A few Labour loyalists struggle to sound convincing. Some shrug, transparently, and say "Who cares? Aren't there too many papers in a dwindling market anyway?" But don't care will be made to care, sooner or later. The Inde-

pendent, in the hands of its grossly stupid owners, will bleed slowly to death, largely because of Murdoch's assault. So what? Well, the day will come when Labour will need more than one liberal/left of centre broadsheet, when fair-weather friends have fled and the cold winds blow. Will Labour find the embarrassment of a row in the Commons over this preferable to

giving up its eerily close relationship with Murdoch? Currently we observe the bizarre spectacle of the Times acting as a counterweight to official notices for Government press releases, while Blair basks in praise from the Sun. But Murdoch is a wolf in waiting. As soon as the Government starts to approach EMU with serious intent, it will be in tooth and claw he will rip off the grandmother's clothes and devour the silly gullible girl. For the most serious damage that Murdoch has inflicted on British politics (alongside that other foreign owner, Conrad Black) has been to distort all public debate in Europe in pursuit of his own financial interests. Already, each time Blair steps too close to Europe, the

Already, each time Blair steps too close to Europe, the Sun snarls

# EMERGENCY COMMITTEE ON IRAQ

The launch of E.C.I. will take place on Thursday 12th February 1998 between 7.30pm and 9.30pm in the Grand Committee Room at the House of Commons (Room booked by George Galloway MP and Tam Dalyell MP)

**Speakers:**  
 HAROLD PINTER  
 TONY BENN MP  
 DIANE ABBOTT MP  
 TAM DALYELL MP  
 DENNIS SKINNER MP  
 DR RANA KABANI  
 LADY ANTONIA FRASER  
 GEORGE GALLOWAY MP

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# Analysis Bio-chemical weapons



Jonathan  
Freedland on  
Generation Next

## Saddam's deadly armoury

They are microscopic but lethal. And they can't simply be shot down. **David Fairhall, Richard Norton-Taylor and Tim Radford** report on the growing threats from such weapons' proliferation



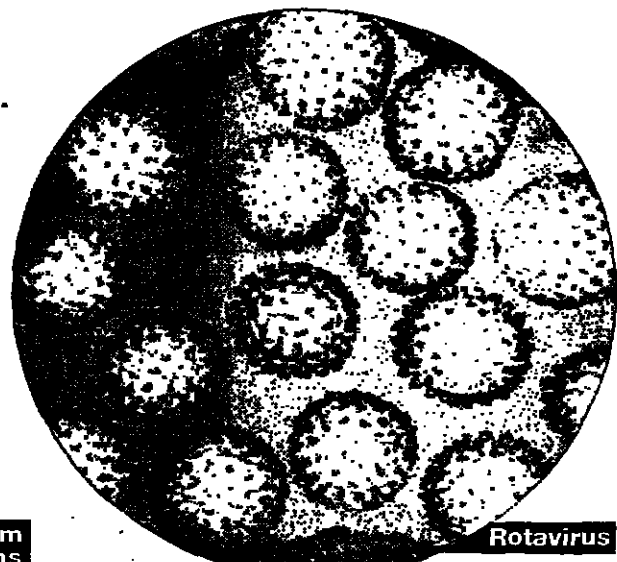
Anthrax



Botulinum toxin



Clostridium perfringens



Rotavirus

According to the UN and western intelligence reports, Iraq has been developing biological and chemical weapons since it began its bio-chemical programme in 1980. The programme began at the Baghdad State Institute, north-west of Baghdad, and moved on to other sites, such as Salman, Palmyra and Hama.

**Anthrax**  
Iraq has developed nearly 2,265 US gallons of anthrax, which is a deadly bacterium. Its spores at first cause flu-like symptoms and fatigue, followed by severe chest congestion. It can be fatal for several days; in its second phase it assaults the lungs, resulting in 80 per cent of cases.

**Botulinum toxin**  
Iraq has developed nearly 3,117 US gallons of this toxin,

which could wipe out the world's population several times. The bacterium is normally found in contaminated food; it produces a highly toxic substance that causes blurred vision, a dry mouth, difficulty in swallowing or speaking, and weakness. Paralysis, respiratory failure and death can follow (80 per cent die).

**Ricin**  
Ricin, a deadly protein toxin derived from castor beans, is one of the most toxic naturally occurring substances. It was this poison used to kill the Bulgarian dissident Georgi Markov in London. Iraq has developed it for use in a military role. Eventually it admitted packing it into a handful of 155mm artillery shells.

**Ablatorin**  
Iraq produced nearly 2,000 litres of ablatorin agent in its Agricultural and Water Resources Research Centre at Fakhkhah, on the outskirts of Baghdad. Ablatorin destroys the trachea

system in animals and is carcinogenic to humans. It often kills by inclusions that grow on ribs; Iraq is a large producer of plethysmographs.

**Clostridium perfringens**  
Iraq produced hundreds of litres of clostridium perfringens at the Hama centre, south-west of Baghdad. The UN destroyed it in 1980. The UN says this bacterium, a common source of food poisoning, was also developed at the Salman (Palmyra) centre. It forms spores that can live for years, and can cause gas gangrene when it finds its way into open battlefield wounds. Gas gangrene produces pain and swelling as the infected area swells with gas; later it causes shock, paralysis and death.

**VX**  
A highly toxic nerve agent, VX is persistent, stable, and deadly. It was used in 1980 against Kurds in Halabja, in Iraq's Kurdistan. On

November 2 1990, the Observer reported that the UN believed Iraq was holding large stocks of VX, and that UN experts were about to inspect it when they were ordered to leave.

**Agent 15**  
The UN has been told that it believed Iraq has produced large quantities of this potent insecticide since the 1980s. It is a chemical warfare agent, and exposure to Agent 15 is thought to cause severe damage, dehydration and loss of life.

**And it's not enough**  
The UN has also been told that Iraq has developed a deadly virus, which is a highly contagious disease. It is a highly contagious disease, and it is not enough to have a deadly virus. It is a highly contagious disease, and it is not enough to have a deadly virus.

**A** NAGGING fear lurks behind the mounting threats to bomb the remnants of Saddam Hussein's military machine: that a missile hidden somewhere in the Iraqi desert could dump tons of nerve gas or deadly anthrax spores on the population of Tel Aviv, or a dozen other cities within range.

True, it is only a remote possibility. Far more remote than it seemed during the 1991 Gulf war, when the Scuds actually were falling on Tel Aviv and Riyadh.

But Saddam has shown he has no qualms about gassing his enemies, even his own citizens. Years of painstaking UN inspections have failed to account for at least two of the Iraqi Scud missiles not used in the Gulf war. And, as an intelligence assessment from Whitehall revealed earlier this week, the UN inspection body Unscow, simply does not know how many usable chemical or biological warheads lie hidden. Only in the past few months, according to the Defence Secretary, George Robertson, a hitherto unmentioned chemical weapon — Agent 15 — has been identified in large quantities.

Whatever the real threat, it is plausible enough to send Israelis once more running for their gas masks. Elsewhere, scientists and intelligence agents — who for years have been emphasising the threat of nuclear proliferation — are turning their attention to the dangers of chemical and biological warfare.

The reason is simple. In the words of Professor Paul

Rogers, head of the department of peace studies at Bradford University, "nuclear weapons are far more difficult to produce than chemical and biological weapons. Any country with a reasonable agricultural industry can modify their sprays and dusts very easily to make CB weapons."

Also, as Unscow's experience in Iraq has shown, it is more difficult for states to hide their nuclear procurement activities than their CB warfare capability.

John Deutch, then CIA director, warned in 1986 that the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons in the hands of states and terrorist groups was "the most urgent, long-term pressing intelligence challenge that we face".

The materials and expertise necessary to build chemical and biological weapons are more readily available today than ever before.

But it is one thing to produce CB weapons, quite another to devise effective delivery systems. According to Unscow, Iraqi scientists have been conducting experiments to find out the most viable warheads and missiles to deliver CB agents. One problem they would face is how to disperse the agent without it burning up on impact or when a missile re-enters the Earth's atmosphere.

Iraq has been experimenting with pilotless aircraft and a specially adapted MIG 21. Ten pilotless drones were covered after the Gulf war in a bomb shelter at the headquarters of the Nair State establishment for Mechanical Industries (1).

But Saddam's Iraq has not

restricted itself to experiments. In March 1988, it used chemical weapons against its own citizens, when the Kurdish town of Halabja was attacked by aircraft: an estimated 8,000 civilians died. The Iraq-Iran war also gave an opportunity to use gas to deadly effect on the battlefield. Now, according to Western intelligence sources, Iraq is even exporting the technology last month they claimed that Iraqi scientists were helping Libya develop a biological-weapons programme, based at the innocuous-sounding General Health Laboratories near Tripoli. Libya is alleged to have turned to Iraq for dual-use equipment — also used in agriculture and health services — which it can no longer get from the West.

**B**IOLOGICAL and chemical weapons are nothing new. Romans poisoned wells by dropping corpses down them, an early form of area-denial. In 1346, the Tatars catapulted plague-infested corpses into the walled city of Kaffa and shortened what looked to be a long siege. Some historians argue that this may also have brought the Black Death to Europe.

Britain has not been averse to developing such weapons. During the first world war, Britain stockpiled five million canisters of infective anthrax to drop on German cattle if the Kaiser's scientists used biological weapons. At the close of the war, British, American and Canadian teams worked on an "anti-personnel" anthrax bomb which

was never made. In fact, the Germans had already discovered — with mustard gas and chlorine attacks — that some weapons were simply too indiscriminate to be trusted.

Anthrax is an old enemy, mostly threatening those who handle animals, or animal products such as hides. It can be cured by drugs, and vaccines exist to protect vets, woolcarders and others at risk. The anthrax bacillus is hardy, and its spores can hang around almost indefinitely. Yet that carries problems: early British anthrax experiments meant that the Scottish island of Gruinard had to be sealed off for decades. And a warehouse full of the stuff is a health hazard behind your own lines. In 1979, 86 people fell sick and 64 died in an anthrax outbreak in Sverdlovsk, in the then USSR. The Russians at the time said it arose from contaminated meat. Later, it became clear that there had been an explosion in a military biological-weapons facility nearby.

The Japanese during the second world war conducted a series of experiments in the notorious camp 731 in Manchuria: they tested prisoners with botulinum, encephalitis, typhoid, smallpox and 16 other microbes. After the war, the US developed weapons that used anthrax, yellow fever, tularemia, brucellosis and other fevers, plus diseases designed to lift crops.

The military disadvantages of bio-chemical weapons — a danger to one's own troops as well as the enemy's — led to agreements to limit their use. The use of gas on the battle-

field was outlawed under agreements dating back to the horrors of mustard gas during the first world war.

A Biological Weapons Convention was signed in 1972 by the US, the USSR and the UK. Yet the convention has not proved wholly successful: a 1993 assessment by a US Congressional office declared that Iran, Iraq, Israel, Libya, Syria, North Korea and Taiwan could have undeclared offensive biological-warfare programmes.

The Chemical Weapons

Convention took a lot longer, held back by mistrust between Washington and Moscow. It did not finally come into force until last April. Destroying the old weapons was always going to be slow, difficult and expensive. And by this time disillusionment had set in as to how far the arms-control regime could really reach.

But what alarmed the strategic analysts was the combination of rapidly proliferating ballistic missiles, especially the ubiquitous Soviet-built

Scuds, and warheads potentially filled with anthrax or VX nerve agent. Syria, for example, is not seeking nuclear weapons as far as we know. But it does have chemical weapons, and plenty of Scuds.

**T**HE great concern nowadays, however, is not simply such weapons' use by a rogue state such as Iraq. There is increasing concern about the threat from terrorist groups. CB weapons used against targets, either carefully chosen or random, cannot be controlled by conventional military action.

The first large-scale chemical-weapons attack by a non-state group took place in March 1995 in Tokyo. Members of the Aum Shinrikyo religious sect released sarin nerve gas on the subway system, killing 12 and injuring 5,500. A droplet of sarin on the skin, or inhaled, renders the victim incapable, and soon dead. The sect had attracted a number of experienced scientists who, according to Japanese police investigators, were also experimenting with other substances, including anthrax.

It could have been worse. In 1982, the head of the Aum cult went to Zaire, ostensibly to help Ebola virus victims — but a US Senate report says it was to get samples (2). Ninety per cent of Ebola victims die, horribly within a week.

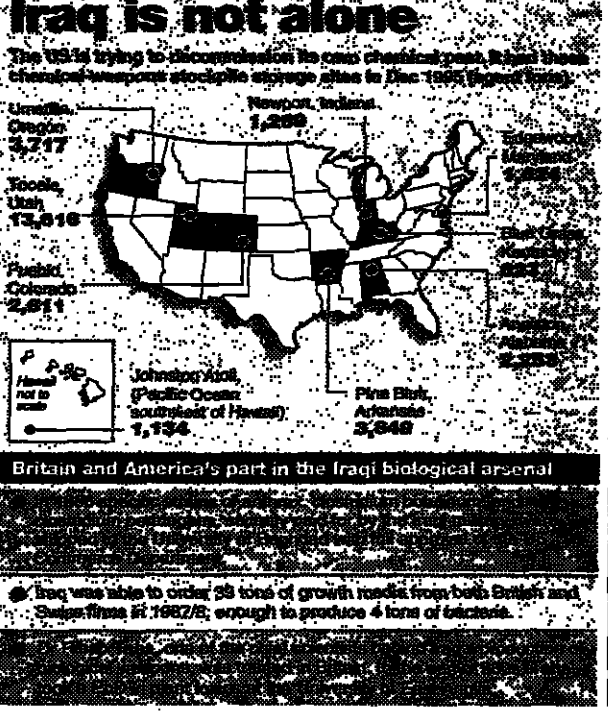
There is evidence of other plans to use CB attacks. In 1995, an Ohio man was arrested trying to buy bubonic-plague cultures through the post. A year later, German police seized from a neo-Nazi group a coded

disc with information about how to use mustard gas.

Dr Alistair Hay, a microbiologist at Leeds University, began warning of bio-weapons in terrorists' hands more than 20 years ago. But even the convention's signatories contain rogue forces. "One thing that staggered me was the biological-warfare work on plague going in Russia in 1992. The government was saying one thing, and the KGB were running a different operation. One wondered how much control some of these countries have over different rogue outfits."

If that worries you, there's worse to come. The new science of genetic engineering raises a hazard to yet higher notches: the fear is that unscrupulous scientists could engineer even more lethal poisons or more virulent microbes. Yet work is going on, everywhere in the world, on the re-engineering of microbes for commercial and medical reasons. How can governments detect evil manipulation at literally microscopic scales?

**Sources:** (1) CIA; (2) Biological Weapons: An Increasing Threat, by Wendy Barnaby (Medicine, Conflict and Survival, Vol 13, No 4, 1997); (3) The Spectre of Biological Weapons, by Leonard A Cole (Scientific American, 12/1996). Weapons panels: ABC News; Unscow; Jane's Defence Weekly, August 14 1996; CNN; BBC News; Washington Post; US Defense Dept. Photographs: Science Photo Library. Researcher: Matt Keating. David Fairhall is the Guardian's defence correspondent; Tim Radford is science editor; and Richard Norton-Taylor writes on security and intelligence matters.



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# FinanceGuardian

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## Inflation stemmed



Bargains galore... Shoppers made up for their caution before Christmas by splurging on the New Year sales

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDY BLACKMORE

## Cost of living plunges

Larry Elliott  
Economics Editor

**R**ECORD-breaking price reductions during the New Year sales sent the cost of living plunging last month, enabling the Government to hit its 2.5 per cent inflation target for the first time since it was elected in May.

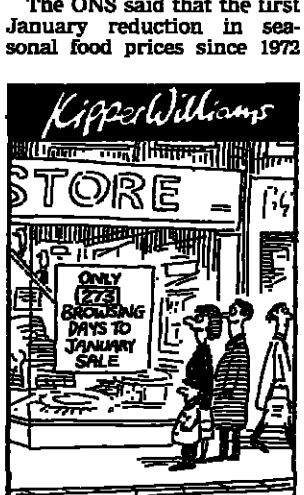
Figures released yesterday by the Office for National Statistics showed that shops were forced to mark down heavily on household goods, clothing and footwear in an attempt to entice cautious consumers back.

Coming in the wake of figures showing manufacturing industry in the doldrums and the strong pound affecting export performance, the good news on inflation prompted the City to speculate that interest rates have now peaked at 7.25 per cent.

Analysts said that the be-

haviour of consumers — many of whom refused to pay the mark-ups demanded by shops and stores in the run-up to Christmas — made it unlikely that the Bank would sanction a sixth post-election rise in borrowing costs.

The ONS said that the first January reduction in seasonal food prices since 1972



As a result, the annual rate of inflation was shaved from 3.6 per cent to 3.3 per cent, a better performance than the City had been predicting.

Underlying inflation — the measure targeted by the Government, which excludes mortgage costs — came down from 2.7 per cent to 2.5 per cent, the ONS said.

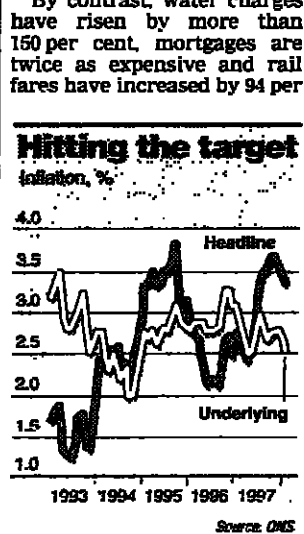
Clothing and footwear prices dropped by 6.6 per cent between December and January, the sharpest drop for any month since records began in 1947.

In the household goods sector, prices fell by 3.9 per cent in January, again the steepest decline on record. Big bargains were available for furniture, furnishings and domestic household equipment.

According to the ONS data, prices have risen by 60 per

cent since 1987, but electrical appliances and women's clothes are now cheaper than they were 11 years ago, while audio-visual goods cost almost 40 per cent less.

By contrast, water charges have risen by more than 150 per cent, mortgages are twice as expensive and rail fares have increased by 94 per



## Nomura runs out of energy

Celia Weston  
Industrial Correspondent

**J**APANESE-OWNED financial house Nomura International last night effectively withdrew from the fight for Energy Group, the UK electricity and coal company which owns Eastern Electricity.

The decision leaves PacificCorp's recommended bid of 76p a share on the table and the group waiting to see whether Texas Utilities will secure the waivers it needs from US regulators to make a rival offer.

In a statement Nomura said it had withdrawn "solely for reasons of price", because the

PacificCorp offer was approximately £1 higher than the Energy Group share price when Nomura had first looked at a possible acquisition.

Nomura had also failed to secure a deal for the sale of Peabody, Energy Group's US coal interests, and had discovered the company had an estimated £200 million a year in liabilities for employee illness. But the finance house denied it would have been forced to leap UK regulatory hurdles to complete a deal.

The move came as electricity industry chiefs last night ruled out the imposition of a levy on every household to help cut costs for poorer consumers. The proposal, which was also condemned by con-

sumers' leaders, came as part of growing speculation about the content of the Government's green paper review of utilities due to be published at the end of the month.

Ministers have been looking at ways to ensure that low income households can also gain from the introduction of competition in domestic gas and electricity supply.

The review has yet to be agreed by Margaret Beckett, the Trade and Industry Secretary, but it is understood that consumer protection will be made the primary duty of utility regulators who will also have a duty to consider environmental concerns and vulnerable consumers, including those on low incomes.

## Silverdale pit to close

David Gow  
Industrial Editor

**M**ORE than 300 miners are to lose their jobs when their Staffordshire pit, Silverdale, is closed for the third and last time in five years later this year.

Midlands Mining, the small private coal-producer that ran the pit, said geological problems had virtually wiped out the mine's reserves of marketable quality coal.

Up to 337 employees could be made redundant by October when production at the mine — around 800,000 tonnes a year — is likely to cease. It is the only Staffs pit left after centuries of mining.

The pit, first threatened with closure by British Coal in 1992-93, was bought after privatisation by Coal Investments, which collapsed in 1996, and finally taken over by Midlands. "I think this time may well be the last time it closes," said David Price of Coal UK, an industry newsletter.

"It's devastating not only for the miners and their families but for the villages surrounding the pit," said Lilin Golding, Labour MP for Newcastle-under-Lyme.

An emotional Jim Sorbie, Midlands managing director, who toyed with the idea of bidding for some of the pits owned by RJB Mining during the coal crisis late last year,

paid tribute to the workforce while offering up to 100 miners the prospect of development work at his firm's only other pit, Annesley/Bentnack, in neighbouring Notts — but 60 miles away.

He said: "They are absolutely desperate for jobs and the guys who are here are a very good workforce; I would say exceptional. Most of them had already been made redundant by British Coal and found life outside the industry less attractive."

Mr Sorbie insisted Midlands could meet its five-year contract with the generators, largely for 1.5 million tonnes a year for PowerGen, from Annesley, a view endorsed by analysts.

## Art dealers fear their trade will be precious no longer

Dan Atkinson

**L**ONDON art dealers who sold about half a billion pounds worth of stock last year fear the party could come to a full stop at the end of 1998. New European taxes threaten a stampede of business to New York, according to the dealers' trade body.

Booming trade in 1996-97 pushed turnover from about £400 million to nearer £500 million.

Dealers are especially pleased their turnover still outweighs the fine-art sales of the top auction houses, Sotheby's and Christie's, estimated at about £220 million,

despite the trend towards auction sales.

But two measures from Brussels, due to take full effect from the 1999, threaten to shrink London's 30 per cent share of the world art market, ending its status as the world's number two art centre, and boost further the standing of the prime market, New York, which currently has about 40 per cent of all sales, according to the Society of London Art Dealers.

Secretary-general Neil Smith said the booming figures for 1996-97 "show just how much there is to be lost".

Old Masters and British paintings up to 1850 took the biggest slice of the stock in

trade, 31 per cent, up from 19 per cent in 1995-96. Next came contemporary art post-1940, at 22 per cent, down from 25 per cent last time. Fourteen per cent was taken by Impressionist and Modern British art, down from 23 per cent, and 19th century European and Victorian art accounted for 10 per cent.

Dealers have joined forces with their rivals in the auction houses to fight two European measures they say will wipe out the London art market. The first, the so-called *droit de suite*, charges 2 to 4 per cent on the value of every sale of a work of art during an artist's lifetime and for 70 years after his death. In-

tended to provide funds for struggling creative types, the impost, say critics, actually benefits only top artists. It is due to come in at the end of this year. About 23 per cent of London's £500 million sales would have qualified for *droit de suite* had it been in force.

The second is the planned increase on VAT on works of art imported from outside the European Union from the 2.5 per cent imposed in 1994 to 5 per cent. This is due to take effect in mid-1999.

Together, says the London art world, these taxes will destroy London — Europe's major art market — and drive the business to New York, where the taxes do not apply.



Portrait of a Franciscan Friar, by Jacopo Bassano (c1510-1592), sold by Simon C. Dickinson of Jermyn Street last year for about £1 million to the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas.

## Notebook

### Only partial relief for the pound



Mark Milner

**Y**ESTERDAY'S inflation figures will bring a measure of relief to those companies, most recently Reuters, BOC and Unilever, which are still being hurt by the strength of sterling. One factor behind the strong pound is the (relatively) high short-term UK rates and the perception that they could go higher. However, with the underlying rate of inflation now bang on the Government's 2.5 per cent target, the case for yet another rise in interest rates — fingers crossed that today's earnings figures don't break the 5 per cent barrier — is weakening by the day. That was reflected, to an extent, by yesterday's fall against the mark.

Unfortunately for those struggling with the strength of sterling, UK interest rates are far from being the whole story. Indeed there are arguments for suggesting they are not even the main story.

Though the Bank of England's repo rate — the equivalent of the old base lending rate — is almost four percentage points above its German counterpart, the position at the long end of the yield curve is very different. UK bond yields are barely 100 basis points above Germany's.

At least part of the pound's popularity is based on investors' reluctance to hold German shares, which are hardly rosy, while the uncertainties still surrounding the single currency project continue to engender caution towards the mark.

Sterling could well undergo a downward correction once the London markets believe the UK interest rate cycle has peaked. Indeed, on past form, they are likely to go from expecting a rate rise to a rate cut in one easy step — a development the Bank is unlikely to want to encourage.

Even the change in market expectations over interest rates will provide only partial relief, however. Like it or not, the longer-term outlook for sterling is linked to the single currency.

headed by arch rivals Bloomberg — in a market where the consolidation of the global financial services industry is eroding the client base.

Reuters is not the only one to find the going getting rougher. On Monday Dow Jones took a \$922.5 million (£570 million) writedown, mainly against its Dow Jones Markets financial data operation — a business it got into through its purchase of Telerate back in the mid-1980s.

Critics claim to see flaws in Reuters' strategy. They argue it has struggled to keep up with the competition in bond pricing services; that it has concentrated selling real-time data to investment bankers and traders, rather than analytical systems to fund managers; above all, that it has been too cautious in deploying its strong cash flow to tag it into new markets.

Reuters remains unrepentant, preferring to return £1.5 billion to shareholders rather than splash the cash on acquisitions. Its Reuters 3000 information terminal may not have quite met its sales target, but the group professes itself satisfied. It is worth remembering, too, that, amid the problems, Reuters retains a market share that, in other industries, would be regarded with envy.

### Euro profits

**D**AVID Clementi, the Bank of England's deputy governor, was in New York last night, flying the flag for the City — and for the European single currency. His message was straightforward. When the euro is introduced at the beginning of 1999, London will be the place in which to do business in the new currency.

His arguments are familiar. London is an international market, with institutions and exchanges well prepared for the single currency and able to provide a full range of services. There was the now familiar addendum that London is not merely a UK asset, it is a European asset too.

That message may play well in New York. It does not go down too well in Europe, least of all in Frankfurt and Paris. Many on the Continent resent the British attitude to the euro. They see it as allowing them to take all the risk of an ambitious enterprise while reserving to the City many of the profits. Nor do they accept the logic of Mr Clementi's arguments. Even as the deputy governor was preparing to woo the Americans, France's European Affairs Minister, Pierre Moscovici, was urging the Paris markets to take advantage of the UK's absence from the initial launch of the euro. Certainly the French derivatives market, Matif, is copying up to its opposite numbers in Frankfurt and Zurich to make life as difficult as possible for London's Life.

Nor are US investors necessarily that keen to do business in euros whether in London or elsewhere. The 2 billion euro global offering from the European Investment Bank later this month will be an interesting test of America's appetite for the new currency.

### Rough for Reuters

**T**HESE are hard times for Reuters, the once omnipotent financial information and services combine. It is not simply a question of the strength of the pound, albeit that sterling's strength is being shouldered with some of the blame for a sharp fall in second-half profits, nor of the grand jury probe in the US into the activities of its Reuters Analytics operation, though the latter has cast a cloud over the share price.

The real problem is operational, a combination of tough competition — spear-

### Fifty projects unveiled for fast-track treatment

Larry Elliott

**F**IFTY prestige projects are being targeted by the Treasury for fast-track progress in a move to breathe new life into the Private Finance Initiative, it was announced yesterday.

Paymaster General Geoffrey Robinson said that the Government would be focusing the efforts of its task force on pushing ahead with a limited number of "significant" contracts rather than putting every conceivable project out to tender.

The troubled £3 billion Channel Tunnel Rail Link is the most expensive deal on the list, which also includes all the secondary schools in Glasgow, and a £200 million new accommodation project at the GCHQ eavesdropping centre in Cheltenham.

Under the new approach, each of the projects chosen for

the elite 50 is either big, high profile, highly replicable, or ground breaking. Mr Robinson said that he was aware of the concern that the selection of only 50 projects risked downgrading perfectly good deals that fell outside the list.

The Paymaster General said that since the election nearly 30 projects worth £1.5 billion had been signed, adding: "The PFI is alive and kicking by any standards."

Included in the Government's priority list are:

- The Channel Tunnel Rail Link, £3 billion.
- Eleven hospitals in England, £50-£120 million each.
- New accommodation project at GCHQ, £200 million.
- Refurbishment of MoD main building, £180 million.
- A13 Thames Gateway Road in Essex, £150 million.
- Building Marchington and Onley prisons: total of £150 million.

### TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.34	France 9.64	Italy 2.871	Singapore 2.81
Austria 20.29	Germany 2.88	Netherlands 3.2387	South Africa 7.83
Belgium 4.53	Greece 456.24	New Zealand 2.70	Spain 243.07
Canada 2.28	Hong Kong 12.28	Norway 12.05	Sweden 13.04
Cyprus 0.649	India 63.73	Portugal 204.48	Switzerland 1.25
Denmark 11.06	Ireland 1.478	Saudi Arabia 9.02	Turkey 251.110
Finland 5.83	Israel 5.90	USA 1.9967	

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli sheqel).











The ear-biting affair

# Woodward throws an England lifeline to banned Yates

Robert Armstrong on support from club and country for the Bath prop found guilty yesterday by the RFU's disciplinary panel

KEVIN YATES, having swiftly lodged his appeal against the Rugby Football Union's six-month ban for biting Simon Fenn's ear in a match against London Scottish, has found a sympathetic ally in the England coach Clive Woodward, who yesterday threw the Bath prop an international lifeline.

Woodward, whose squad is short of high-quality Test props, made it clear that he hoped the twice-capped 27-year-old would be available for international selection next season.

Club sources suggest that Bath, too, are prepared to stand by Yates after they have held their own internal inquiry and reached a financial agreement with the player over the loss of his services until July 10, when the ban runs out.

Having almost certainly lost the England prop John Mallett, who faces a 90-day ban for stamping in a reserve game last weekend, Bath are likely to close ranks behind him and Yates.

Woodward's positive response has also reminded Bath that, whether or not Yates wins his appeal, which must be heard by the RFU within 14 days, they have a proven England prop on their books. Bath, whose European Cup triumph guarantees them a place in Europe as holders next season, are aware that Yates would probably be snapped up were his Bath contract terminated.

"We have to go along with the RFU decision on Yates," acknowledged Woodward. "Quite clearly he cannot be considered until next season unless his appeal is successful. I just hope he returns fit, in form and available to resume what looks like being a promising career."

Jeff Probyn, however, a for-

## Lack of video evidence to support verdict could be basis for successful appeal

plating a bleak professional future, simply sit out the season, take a refreshing summer break and resume Premiership rugby with Bath when the new season begins in mid-August. He could find himself targeted by opponents and rival fans on his return but, given his resilient nature, that should not prove an insurmountable barrier to his progress.

"It is difficult with any employee should the subject of dismissal crop up," said Thomas Sheppard, director of Bath Rugby. "Clearly Kevin is a talented player, who is well liked and respected, but no one here is belittling Simon Fenn's injury."

"Regarding Kevin's club disciplinary hearing, then it

is obviously not practical for us to stage it until any RFU appeal has taken place."

Yates's immediate hurdle is the appeal process, which may be as protracted as the RFU tribunal hearing which occupied three lengthy sessions under the chairmanship of Michael Burton QC.

"I'm very upset and disappointed with the [RFU] decision and I am completely innocent," said Yates, who has consistently maintained that position since the Tenterden Bitter Cup match on January 10 in which Fenn suffered an ear wound.

Significantly Woodward left the England door ajar for Yates a fortnight ago when he remarked: "If Kevin maintains he is innocent of ear-biting, then I think we have to accept that unless the evidence proves otherwise."

Unsurprisingly in view of his previous stance, Yates declared he would lodge an appeal with his lawyers forthwith. The lack of video evidence to support the RFU verdict could give Yates a strong basis for a successful appeal, since no player witnessed the incident.

If Yates's appeal fails he could seek to have the RFU verdict overturned in the High Court and, if that proved successful, he could sue for damages.

The fall-out from the Yates affair is certain to bring about irrevocable change in the disciplinary procedures of English rugby. Whatever the fate of the RFU verdict, few would deny that Yates had to wait too long for the disciplinary hearing to take place and the way the evidence was collated was time-consuming.

In fact, the decision by a club to suspend a player because he has been charged with violent play is deeply suspect: it implies a degree of guilt.

Yates was suspended on full pay by Bath but he may feel his enforced absence from the European Cup final in Bordeaux was an unwarranted punishment in advance of the RFU hearing.



Protesting innocence... Kevin Yates, banned for six months yesterday, was quick to say he would appeal

## Le Roux warns stigma will stick

John Duncan

THE shame of being branded a biter will never leave Kevin Yates, says a man who should know: Johan Le Roux.

"He has received a six-month ban for biting an opponent's ear, and that stigma will always be attached to him," said the South African, banned from rugby for 19 months after chewing the New Zealand captain Sean Fitzpatrick's ear during a 1994 Test.

"It won't go away, never. I have learned to handle my situation — the public outcry, the suspension itself — the swipes people want to take at you — but it is not easy."

Neither, of course, is it easy to recover from having part of one's ear bitten off. Ollie Waldron was the first high-profile forward to have his ear bitten by an opponent back in 1966, when he was playing for Oxford University. He was left with flesh hanging from a torn ear after he was bitten in a scrum by the Australian Ross Gullen, who was sent home in disgrace.

"The union are being soft if they don't jump on that sort of thing," said Waldron recently. "It's just professional violence." Waldron, who underwent an operation to repair the damaged ear, built a successful career as the respected chief executive of the gas company Dragon Oil.

Fran Cotton, chairman of the RFU's National Playing Committee, said the Yates ban was right for a player with no record of violence. "Six months is a very severe punishment indeed," he said. "In Le Roux's case his previous poor behaviour was taken into consideration."

Others were less impressed. "He was found guilty and on that basis a six-month ban seems a little bit high," said Jeff Probyn, who played in the 1991 World Cup final pack for England. "If he did it, the sentence isn't long enough." But did he? David Sole, who won the Grand Slam with Scotland in 1990, should be enough. "He's not the player he was," admitted Borque, "but even at 90 per cent of the old Gretzky he's a bit special."

The former Scotland international Sean Lineen expressed no doubt: "It [the ban] is ludicrous. It should be a couple of years at least. The guy is definitely guilty. I see a lot of his Bath colleagues have distanced themselves from him. They know he is guilty."

## Hard evidence that lacked video teeth

Robert Kitson on the early-morning end to a hearing that seemed to last for ever

BACK on that deceptively mellow Saturday in Bath the story of Simon Fenn's ear appeared a classic open-and-shut case. One heavily bandaged Australian, one guilty man, one lengthy ban.

It says everything about modern rugby's uncertain relationship with the law that prominent legal brains were still debating the issues a month later. It took 25 hours of evidence to arrive at the guilty verdict handed down to the England prop Kevin Yates

at around 1.10 yesterday morning.

There remains every chance of extra-time. Even if the 25-year-old Yates does not exercise his right to appeal within 14 days, victim and accused have spent the equivalent of a six-Test Ashes series awaiting a result.

The evidence presented to the three-man panel chaired by Michael Burton QC in London was stacked eight inches high on the table. Expert opinions canvassed ranged from a Home Office forensic

scientist and a Harley Street doctor to Jeff Probyn and Jack Rowell; 30 witnesses were called and it required three hearings to arrive at the candle-lit conclusion.

The crucial factor against Yates was the panel's adherence to the "balance of probability" required in civil cases, rather than the "beyond reasonable doubt" of criminal proceedings. Even so, without a confession the lack of video footage unmasking the culprit was a major headache to the investigation.

London Scottish and Bath players appeared before the initial 12-hour hearing last Tuesday and more depositions were heard in a second

five-hour session on Wednesday evening. Each player was granted around half an hour; old hands such as Probyn, called upon to shed some light on the dynamics of scrummaging, made sure they had eaten before they came.

The RFU disciplinary officer Roy Manock, observing the whole process, was as frustrated as anyone when the case was adjourned until Monday. He had originally had a hearing set up for January 21, only for Yates's solicitors to apply for a High Court injunction to delay it. Then, after the late Wednesday session, he was informed that written transcripts would take two to three days to be

typed out, delivered and studied. With Burton required in court during the day, Monday evening was the only option.

Yates's long wait continued as legal summings-up continued until 11.30pm, at which point the panel retired to consider its verdict.

Despite reservations about the ban — "I know if somebody bit me I wouldn't be too happy if they had just ended up with a six-month ban," said Probyn yesterday — Yates must pay £20,000 towards London Scottish's costs and £3,500 towards the RFU's, subject to his appeal. If he is guilty, it was an expensive mouthful.

## How the drama unfolded

January 10 Bath v London Scottish. Late in first-half Fenn emerges from collapsed scrum clutching ear and shouting he has been bitten.

January 11 Bath interview unnamed player who protests innocence.

January 12 London Scottish release picture of Fenn's ripped ear and announce they are citing entire Bath front row.

January 13 Bath suspend Yates on full pay pending a disciplinary.

January 14 Scots outraged by claims expressed by honorary Bath doctor Philip Bliss that Fenn's injury could have been caused by a stud.

January 15 Bath interview entire pack of forwards; set date of January 20 for disciplinary hearing.

January 16 Yates's solicitors seek High Court injunction to delay hearing, so allowing them more time to examine evidence. Bath and RFU inquiries delayed until February 3.

January 24 Fenn returns for London Scottish.

February 3 Three-man RFU disciplinary panel led by Michael Burton QC spends 12 hours at Twickenham hearing evidence from players, ex-players and medical experts.

February 4 Hearing resumes in evening in central London. Evidence heard for further five hours.

February 9 Legal summings-up start at 5pm in Burton's chambers; panel breaks to discuss verdict, which is finally delivered around 11.30pm.

11.00am. Yates is banned for six months and costs totalling around £23,000 are awarded against him. He continues to protest his innocence and indicates he is likely to appeal. He has 14 days to do so.

## Cricket

### Renegades to the fore as the inquest starts

Mike Selvey in Port of Spain on the abject bowling that lost England the second Test

THERE was a jauntiness in Port of Spain yesterday morning, as business returned to normal. It is celebration time here but even the news that the Antigua Renegades steel band had won the regional Pan-Am finals — normally the biggest of pre-carnival licks — was knocked from the front pages by West Indies' remarkable win against the odds in the second Test.

The England players trailed into breakfast wearing the stunned looks of men who had taken a midnight stroll across the town's Savannah and been relieved of their wallets at machete-point. Which is the equivalent of what happened at Queen's Park Oval on Sunday and Monday — mugged. One minute they had it all, the next it had been taken away.

It was not until the day after the nightmare before that the England team realised the implications of what had happened. For in losing a game that they had by the scruff, and in such a manner, they may already have lost a series they believed in. All their hearts was there for the taking if only they got the basics right.

One week ago West Indies cricket was in crisis, bereft of money, confidence, unity and credibility. But the pictures of Brian Lara bear-hugging

into something more substantial than one of 281.

Even then the game was as good as won for England. 124 for five on an unruly pitch. Yet, when the situation demanded it, only Angus Fraser was able to produce bowling of international match-winning quality.

It cannot be simply lack of talent or technique that made Dean Headley and Andy Caddick bowl short with the new ball to such a gleeful puller as Stuart Williams — on a pitch that, as Fraser and Curtly Ambrose demonstrated, demanded nothing more than the simple virtues of relentless line and length and patience — and produce leg-stump half-volleys for David Williams when he so obviously favours that side. One can only assume it to be either indiscipline or a fundamental lack of guile; or maybe they are just thick.

England have little time and no tour match to ponder their options, so the chances are they will decide that a side which dominated for three days might do so for five next time. But they should first take on board that the best batsmen have to take responsibility higher in the order, and that lack of match practice for alternatives is no reason to persist with bowlers if it is felt they are not mentally up to the job. But perhaps the hardest truth is that, regardless of the views of dew-eyed romantics, the best and most functional England side has Alec Stewart keeping wicket.

## Tennis

### Henman knocked into crisis point

Richard Jago in Dubai

TIM HENMAN suffered his third successive first-round exit and another big blow to his confidence when he collapsed to a 7-6, 6-0 defeat by a resurgent Boris Becker here yesterday at the outdoor Dubai Open.

During a humiliating second set the British No. 2 seemed unable to think of a way even to slow the flood enveloping him. His look of resignation underlined that this is his worst spell since bursting on to the big stage 19 months ago.

Henman's most flattering moment was when he immediately broke back after dropping his second service game, but this triggered such a fusillade of accurate serving from the former Wimbledon champion that Henman was unable to win another point against it during the first set and took only one point from his next 25 attempts.

This was by no means a serve-and-volley surface either, indicating the waywardness into which Henman increasingly lapsed with his ground-strokes. That in turn piled up the pressure on his delivery and, when he managed only two first serves in eight points in the 11th game, Becker's booming backhand enjoyed a feast.

Another break at the start of the second turned it into a rout: four breaks in a

row, seven games in a row and a second set of only 24 minutes were statistics which told cold truths.

Becker later tried to soften the blow. "He is still a great player with a lot of potential," he said generously. "Matches like this happen and they are going to make him stronger."

The question is, when? This looks like becoming a critical test of his coach David Felgate's ability to tease out solutions at this high level. "It's a confidence thing," a stunned looking Henman said. "I just have to keep working hard and it will pay off."

Henman is partnering Becker here in the doubles. At least an extended close-up view of just how fit and formidable the German has recently become may lend Henman a sense of perspective on his defeat.

The first upset of the tournament was caused by Jeff Tarango, this time a result of his tennis and not his temperament. The American demolished the fifth-seeded Spaniard Sergi Bruguera 6-3, 6-3.

Marcelo Rios, the No. 2 seed, made an even briefer appearance after taking a tortuous route from Melbourne via the United States and Chile and losing his passport en route. That required some skilful talking on arrival here but his racket shattered and the Australian Open finalist subsided 6-3, 6-3 to New Zealand's Brett Steven.

## Winter Olympic Games

### Gretzky arrives for the greatest show on ice

Pete Nichols reports from Nagano where puckish Canada's idol has come for gold

IT DID not have quite the same drama as Tonya Harding's arrival in Lillehammer four years ago but Wayne Gretzky certainly made an impact when he breezed into town yesterday.

He arrived in a solid six or seven to the snowfalls.

The Canada ice hockey team, of which Gretzky is the most illustrious member, may be staying in the Olympic Village here but that did not mean they had to travel economy class. They chartered their own jumbo, converting part of it into a conference room, and travelled on from Tokyo on the Shin-kansen Bullet Train.

The moment Gretzky alighted at the station a flying wedge of fans, photographers and press virtually carried him up the stairs, across the concourse and on to the team bus, an experience the man termed "a little unnerving".

It was no tidier when Gretzky made his appearance at the official Canadian press conference. The organisers, determined that Canada's greatest son should be treated no differently from anyone else on the team, simply wheeled him out on to the stage, unsmiled with the rest of the squad. They were largely ignored, Gretzky immediately swamped.

At the edge of the scrum it was possible to catch only the occasional word — "thrilled

... focused... positive... excited" — but it was enough to show that Gretzky was not dubbed The Great One for his public speaking.

Only once did he stray into controversial territory. "I feel I've got another eight or nine years in me," he said. We started after the snowfalls and fog, an hour's drive away in Hakuba, with the slalom element of the men's combined event. The Austrian Hermann Maier, everybody's favourite bricklayer, struggled with the course and conditions and joined in the general grumbling.

Another Austrian, Mario Reiter, leads the field by a healthy 1.81sec going into tomorrow's downhill segment but Norway's Lasse Kjus could yet catch him.

In the men's curling event, taking place in Karuizawa some 25 miles from here, Britain's curling quartet suffered potential knock-out defeats by Switzerland and Canada, by 10-4 and 10-3 respectively. The women, in contrast, won their only game, against Norway, by 6-4.

Figure skating's first title came in the pairs but did not go to the European champions, Russia's Elena Berezhnaya and Anton Sikharulidze. They fell in the final flourish of their long programme and watched wryly as their teammates Oksana Kazakova and Artur Dmitriev struck gold.

Gretzky... mobbed



# SportsGuardian

## Adams to lead England again



**They're off . . . the Chile players set off on a sprint during a training session at Wembley yesterday for tonight's game against England**

# Owen adds touch of Chile spice

**David Lacey** weighs up Glenn Hoddle's choices, who will get a taste of traditional Latin American fare in tonight's game at Wembley

**T**HE last time England played Chile the game drew the smallest crowd to Wembley for a full international. A Tube strike helped cut the gate to 15,626 on a May evening in 1989 and the prospect of John Fashanu leading Bobby Robson's attack hardly set pulses racing.

Tonight the Wembley scene will be rather different. A crowd more than four times that size will watch the pro-

logue to Glenn Hoddle's attempt to make at least as big an impact on the 1998 World Cup in France as Robson's England team did in reaching the semi-finals of Italia 90. And the knowledge that the 18-year-old Michael Owen is about to become the youngest player to appear for England this century has clearly captured the public's imagination.

Hoddle believes that Chile will provide opposition close in style and ability to Colombia.

bia, England's last opponents in the opening phase. England could find themselves having to win in Lens on June 26 to reach the last 16 and it is essential that they gain some experience of trying to overcome a skilful, close-passing South American team.

Tony Adams will captain England for the first time since the World Cup qualifier in Georgia 16 months ago. More recently Paul Ince has usually worn the armband

when Alan Shearer has not been as scabbe, with raises in the possibility of a last-minute rested tonight so that Hoddle can employ Nicky Butt in the midfield anchor role. Or he may play both.

Anyway, with Shearer not starting the game after his six-month lay-off, Adams seems as natural a choice to lead England now as he appeared to be before the decisive World Cup qualifier against Italy in Rome. On that occasion Hoddle opted for Ince, arguing that Adams needed to concentrate on his own job in defence. But now the Arsenal coach feels the Arsenal cap-

"Mentally he's 100 percent," said Hoddie. "Physically he still has some way to go but I believe he is ready to be captain again, a job that demands 70 per cent concentration on your own game and 30 per cent on everyone else's."

The sight of Adams in charge once more will be reassuring but a crowd approaching 65,000 will be more keen to see how Owen shapes up as a potential late runner for the World Cup squad. Owen will play tonight, that much they

the strength of Butt's form for United this season demands that he be given a full World Cup audition, Ince or no Ince.

Similarly Hoddle may have decided that Steve McNamaman is due a chance in the first team. He was given an Arsenal debut, especially as he is a cologne short of match, though not flute, practice after a long suspension at Ibrox. If McNamaman is to go to France he needs to convince Hoddle now that there can be an end product.

Incidentally, a point of interest in the Chile team will be the appearance at Wembley of Marcelo Salas, one of the most

English fans are these days. Glenn Hoddle's team could play a Santiago Gas Works XI and still fill Wembley to the floor.

It has been this way since Euro 96, when benign patriotism reclaimed the old stadium from the bulldog tendency and English football itself came out of the caves. Almost 300,000 spectators saw England's four home World Cup qualifying games whereas Italy attracted only 125,000 of theirs. England pulled in 71,206 for the game against Georgia; the Italians could entice just 15,146. Across Europe the story was the same: Spain's highest attendance

just talked to quantify for me World Cup, the position would have been very different. The money will be used by the FA to drive all our programmes and develop our sport.

Carling promises there will be no FA-endorsed kiss-me-quick hats or Y-fronts. "We're trying to go for a strategy of less is more. It has to be about quality and excellence," he says. "If people start seeing Three Lions on a pair of knickers, that ultimately undermines your brand value and you end up selling less."

5

*[The page contains extremely faint, illegible text.]*

Gran	74 miles
Paul	128 miles
Dad	51 miles
Hamish	638 miles
Lisa	249 miles

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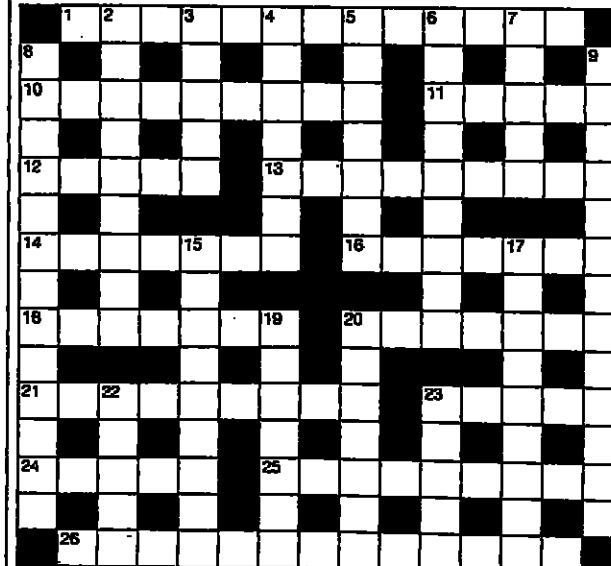
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**A nagging fear lurks behind the mounting threats to bomb the remnants of Saddam Hussein's military machine: that a missile hidden somewhere in the Iraqi desert could dump tons of nerve gas on the population of Tel Aviv, or one of a dozen other cities within range.**

**Analysis**  
**page 14**

## Guardian Crossword No 21,195

Set by Araucaria



### Across

- 1 A nuisance about EMF's once shattered state going with a 23 down? (7,2,4)
- 10 Exaggerated rings incompatible with diesel (4,5)
- 11 2 used here (5)
- 12 Put your foot down: it's essential on a tyre (5)
- 13 Fox's memory goes back to earth in border town (9)
- 14 Swell in lower note (7)
- 15 Producing a feeling that I have returned back before (7)
- 18 I use my left incompetently and here's the next world (7)
- 20 Naval 2 coloured on both sides of revolution (7)
- 21 Conservative? Don't let anyone see the spring (9)

23 Love wins prize by  
instinctive forces (5)  
24 Model with not enough flesh  
dangle stand up (5)  
25 It takes royalty to back  
musicals, and not just once (9)  
2 23 down taken from Delhi  
(7-8)

**Down**

2 Breast stroke makes the fast  
escape (9)  
3 Hero of the railway police  
(2,3)  
4 The place for pigeons, one  
inside another, is a tart (7)  
5 Ring leaves right away, it's  
late (7)  
6 Reptile on road, a large  
number for a small world (9)  
7 Amend works with a title (5)  
8 2, a military formation and


C	A	S	H	E	D	S	K	A	B	L	A	Z	E	R
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T	O	S	R	U	L									
F	A	N	J	E	T	S	T	A	M	P	E	D		

**CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21,184**

9 2s or 4s paddle in sea. it appears (7, 6)  
15 Elevated opera —  
Fledermaus, I see — heard  
without change of  
temperature (5)  
17 Sound of bird without  
companion turned into  
break-in (5)  
19 French writer shows I am a  
cur (7)  
20 Listening to relation about  
to finish (7)  
22 Curtain cover? (5)  
23 Church music from the pew  
(5)  
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# Sports

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